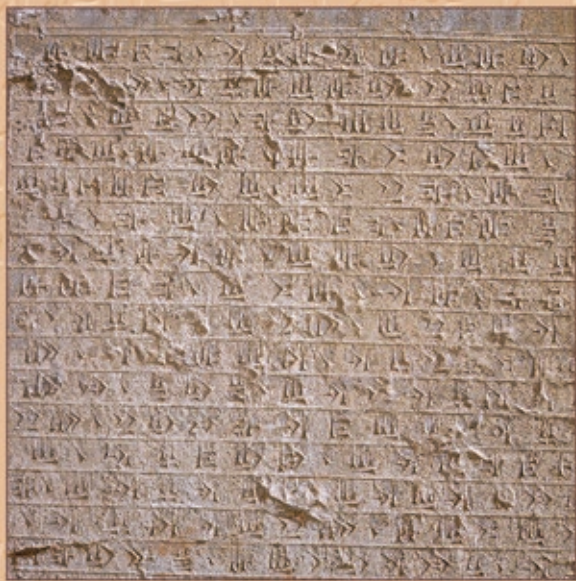


BRONZE AGE BUREAUCRACY

WRITING AND THE PRACTICE
OF GOVERNMENT IN ASSYRIA



NICHOLAS POSTGATE

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Bronze Age Bureaucracy

This book describes 10 different government archives of cuneiform tablets from Assyria, using them to analyse the social and economic character of the Middle Assyrian state, as well as the roles and practices of writing. The tablets, many of which have not been edited or translated, were excavated at the capital, Aššur, and in the provinces, and they give vivid details that illuminate issues such as offerings to the national shrine, the economy and political role of elite households, palace etiquette and state-run agriculture. This book concentrates particularly on how the Assyrian use of written documentation affected the nature and ethos of government, and compares this to contemporary practices in other palatial administrations at Nuzi, Alalah and Ugarit, and in Greece.

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Bronze Age Bureaucracy

Writing and the Practice of Government in Assyria

Nicholas Postgate

University of Cambridge



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Preface and Acknowledgements

Conscious that Assyria offers the richest material for the role of writing in government in the Late Bronze Age, though this has remained virtually unknown to historians, my original intention was to do no more than describe the role of written documents in the Middle Assyrian state. However it soon became apparent that such a work would have little meaning without giving readers some background to the society, and, on another level, an account of the principal archives. Hence this book begins by describing the social and economic infrastructure of Assyria at this time, and examining scribal traditions and document types in use. This is followed by an account of the government activities revealed by the selected archives, large parts of which are currently only available in cuneiform copy, and, for comparison, separate studies of the use of written records at Nuzi and other Late Bronze Age neighbours and contemporaries. The result is a fatter book than I had originally planned, but I hope that readers will be able and willing to select the parts most of interest to them.

The book could not have been written without the benefit of a three-year research fellowship, and the assistance of a host of good-natured colleagues. For the Senior Research Fellowship, which ran from September 2009 to the end of September 2012, my sincerest thanks go to the Leverhulme Trust. In this context also I must express my deep gratitude to Nicole Brisch who took up the yoke of my teaching for these three years, and to my other colleagues in Cambridge who bore the burdens imposed by my virtual disappearance with a good grace, most especially Augusta McMahon. At home my heartfelt thanks go to Sarah, and to Alexander, Jessica and Florence, for their patience and support in suffering my absences, whether in 13th-century Assyria or 21st-century Turkey.

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With the provision of illustrations and permission to reproduce them generous help has come from Philip Abrahams, Pierre Amiet, Dominique Charpin, Dominique Collon, Eva von Dassow, Robert Englund, Barbara Feller (in several cases), Helmut Freydank (also several times), Joseph Greene, Stefan Jakob, Hartmut Kühne, Joachim Marzahn, Peter Miglus, Gerfrid Müller, Elizabeth Postgate, Beate Salje, Ursula Seidl, Diana Stein, Piotr Steinkeller, Wilfred van Soldt, Michaela Weszeli and Marguerite Yon (see the List of Illustrations, pp. vi–vii).

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Note on Transcription

The transliterations of cuneiform texts follow the normal conventions used by Assyriologists for Akkadian texts. Akkadian (i.e. Babylonian or Assyrian) words written syllabically are shown in lower-case italics, while logograms are rendered in their conventional Sumerian form in Roman capitals. The standard transcription of Akkadian uses a number of special characters: ḫ for ch as in loch, q for an emphatic k, ṣ for an emphatic s, š for sh as in lash, and ṭ for an emphatic t. In the transcriptions, the lines of text on the original tablet are retained, and the indents often used by the scribes in the first line of text and close to and on the base of the obverse are also indicated. Rulings within the text correspond to rulings on the tablet. Square brackets (and half square brackets) indicate lost or broken signs. In the transcriptions the abbreviations PN, and sometimes PN₁ and PN₂, are used to stand for one or more personal names where it is immaterial which name it represents.

In transcribing personal and geographical names the transliteration conventions of Akkadian are observed, but no attempt is made to indicate vowel length (by using ā, ē, ī or ū) or crasis (by using a circumflex). Ancient Near Eastern personal names are often (but by no means always) mini sentences conveying sentiments expressed at the time of the child's birth. Tiglath-pileser is the biblical form of Tukulti-apil-Ešarra, meaning "My support is the heir of (the temple) Ešarra", while Babu-aḫa-iddina means "(The goddess) Babu gave a brother". Our normal practice is to hyphenate the separate words composing these sentences, and to a limited extent this is also done for Hurrian names, such as Šilwa-Teššup or Hašip-apu, even when the meaning of some of the components is not fully understood. Most personal names in the Middle Assyrian texts are indexed in Saporetti 1970d and updated by Freydank & Saporetti 1979 and subsequently by the indices in MARV 3–10 and other recent publications of texts from outside Assur. A new online corpus combining these with the material from new publications is urgently needed to enable Middle Assyrian studies to make full use of prosopography.

1 | Bureaucracy in the Bronze Age?

Assyria – “The Land of Aššur”¹ – was one of the few polities in the Near East and the eastern Mediterranean which survived the upheavals at the end of the Bronze Age to which the Hittite Empire, Ugarit and the palaces of Mycenaean Greece succumbed. Mesopotamian specialists call the period from 1500 to 1000 BC *Middle Assyrian*, using this term to refer to both the political history and the stage of the Assyrian dialect of Akkadian. In the 14th century, and especially in the 13th century, the kings of this first Assyrian territorial state participated in the palatial culture of the Late Bronze Age (sometimes known as the Amarna Age from the international correspondence of the pharaohs preserved on cuneiform tablets retrieved from El Amarna), and they joined the club of “Great Kings”, to which Egypt, Babylon, Mittani and the Hittite kings belonged.² Of all these great powers, and of all the minor states which were often subordinated to them, it is Assyria which has to this date yielded the greatest variety of written sources, both from the capital and from provincial centres, to illustrate how their power was exercised, and this is the main theme of this book, making it a case study of government in one of the Late Bronze Age states.

Assyria did not of course exist in isolation, and Assyria’s neighbours in time and space such as Nuzi, Alalah, Ugarit and the Mycenaean palaces all participated in the lively international scene in the era of Tutankhamun, and all used clay tablets which have survived to give us a glimpse of the administration of their lands. A comparison shows significant differences in the role of the written documents, and hence in the style of government, further west, although some of the parallels between Assyria and the Mycenaean world are intriguing. In many ways, though, these are all Bronze Age societies: there are distinct similarities between these Late Bronze Age states and between this part of the world in 1800 BC and in 1300 BC. Hence the broad-brush, traditional archaeological concept of the Bronze Age may help to underline these similarities and to point out the contrast with the very different Iron Age world into which Assyria, Babylonia and Egypt survived.

The land of Aššur in the Middle Assyrian period can thus be viewed as a Bronze Age society, but what of the term *bureaucracy*? One definition in my dictionary reads “a system of government or administration by officials, responsible only to their departmental chiefs”³, thus giving full weight to the concept of a bureau as a government department, which is not inappropriate for the Middle Assyrian case. It will become clear that the bureaux of the Assyrian state were partly supplied by the elite households of the city of Aššur, which retained their

¹ Aššur is the name of both the capital city and its patron deity.

² For a readable, recent account of this diplomatic scene, see Podany 2010.

³ *The Chambers Dictionary* (1993).

own separate existence as private enterprises. It also seems very likely that the state's administrative modes were modelled on long-standing merchant house traditions. The dictionary's second definition of *bureaucracy* reflects our more negatively loaded usage: "any system of administration in which matters are hindered by excessive adherence to minor rules and procedures". What was "excessive" can only be a matter of opinion, but it will become clear that, in the 13th century at least, the government of Assyria did have its rules and procedures, as reflected in its output of written documents, and that these were more elaborate than those of its close contemporaries or neighbours. In this sense too, therefore, it is not unreasonable to describe it as a bureaucracy.

In using this word, I am, however, conscious that it was applied in a more narrowly defined sense by Weber, who opposed *bureaucratic* to *patrimonial* states.⁴ Middle Assyrian government was organised around the concept of the *house* or *household*, and one might well be tempted to consider it a prime example of a patrimonial early state. However, I shy away from classifying the Middle Assyrian system of government as patrimonial, for there is every reason to think that the houses in question, while functioning in two sectors of society, were aware of the difference and observed the demarcation between them. Just as in many societies today the template of democracy is applied in many different contexts from electing a government to electing the chair of a choral society, without there being an organic relationship between the two, so in Assyria it would have been perfectly natural to borrow the ethos and procedures of the commercial world when establishing an administrative bureau, but this does not oblige us to assume that the two functions were fused. Similarity does not have to imply identity.

The Mesopotamian background

Assyria was of course a late-comer in the history of Mesopotamian bureaucracy. Pride of place will always go to the Third Dynasty of Ur (ca. 2100–2000 BC), whose obsessive documentation was surely never matched. There too the procedures and perhaps also the ethos of commercial life were adapted to the logistical administration of the state, and it may not be coincidental that both governments were seeking to apply a monolithic system across previously independent territories. Just as with Assyria, we are left wondering if Ur III scribal practice was driven by an exaggerated "audit culture" in which administrative duties were equated with commercial liabilities and the documentation was designed to prevent malfeasance while at the same time safeguarding each official from his colleagues. Addressing this issue, Van de Mieroop used the craft archive from the city of Ur and wrote of the individual receipt tablets that "their appearance in the summary account shows their original purpose. The procurement of goods had to be documented, so that the accountant could be absolved from the responsibility for any discrepancies in the available stock, in case of future disputes".⁵

⁴ For bureaucratic and patrimonial states in an Ur III context, see the helpful account of Garfinkle 2008.

⁵ Van de Mieroop 1997, 14.

Steinkeller summarises this as “documents were an instrument of administrative control, which enabled a superior official to audit the performance of his subordinates”, but in his opinion such considerations would have been a secondary factor, “since for the purposes of accountability unwritten forms of reporting would have been quite sufficient”.⁶ However this does not seem to explain why seals were so routinely impressed on tablets which recorded the shifting liabilities within the administration. Members of the literate sector of society may well have operated simultaneously in state and private spheres, and although it has been suggested that “a number of practices developed in the sector of public administration were diffused throughout the private sector as well, and adapted to suit new purposes” (Larsen 1989, 138), it seems entirely possible that the flow was in the opposite direction and that in Ur III times too the administrative system adopted and adapted concepts and practices from commerce.

Nevertheless, the Ur III scribal output can also be seen in a more positive light as providing policymakers and planners with an array of data forming a solid basis for their decisions, and enabling the scribes to create forward-looking estimates.⁷ Undoubtedly some of their account tablets were drawn up to serve the internal purposes of the bureaux concerned, rather than acting as bilateral instruments regulating the responsibilities of the officials. No doubt both were important, but we are left guessing most of the time, because in Ur III times, as in the Middle Assyrian state, the bald administrative texts greatly outnumber the occasional examples of correspondence between officials which might expose more of their attitudes to their work. Remarks like “He must not argue because no seal was rolled (on this tablet)” (Sollberger 1966 no. 302) are as rare in the Ur III corpus as the Assyrian instruction “If within one month you have not brought (and) converted (it), they will not encase (it) for you” (Jakob 2009 Nos. 22–6). Coming closer in time and space, the plethora of state correspondence from Mari under its Amorite rulers in the early second millennium also has relatively little to say about the practices and ethos of administrative recording. Here too the records themselves tend to constitute our best evidence, but the occasional remark in letters can provide a useful corrective, as in the case of two passages cited by Fissore, which led Palaima to comment that “both examples show us that writing enters the routine administrative process in anomalous situations, but is not used in regular circumstances”, a comment which may be valid for Mari and elsewhere, but will not apply in some Middle Assyrian contexts, as should become clear.⁸

The structure of this book

From the outset the aim of this book has been to explore how governments in the Late Bronze Age, and especially the Assyrian state, made use of written instruments, and what effect this may have had on how they governed. This remains the underlying theme, but it may seem

⁶ Steinkeller 2004, 79.

⁷ As set out in Steinkeller 2004.

⁸ Palaima 2004, 358 referring to the sealing practices attested in ARMT 10.12 and ARMT 13.22.

unlikely that there is enough to say about documentary practice to fill a book of this size, and the truth is that much of what follows is not so much about the documents themselves as the organisations which produced them. To appreciate the role of the written documents we need to understand the social and administrative context in which they were written. There is no recent study of the Middle Assyrian sources which meets this need, largely because over half the documentary sources now available were only published in the past decade or two. As it happens, the different Middle Assyrian archives derive from a variety of government activities,⁹ and when assembled they form a mosaic which presents a coherent picture of the functioning of the state in a level of detail we cannot otherwise match in any of the Late Bronze Age palatial states.

Consequently, after a general survey of the social and economic scene in Chapter 2 and an account of scribal practices and terminology in Chapter 3, the five archives from Aššur described in Chapter 4 and the five from the provinces highlighted in Chapter 5 have been selected not only to provide case studies of Middle Assyrian scribal practice, but also to build up a rounded picture of the variety of state and private administrative enterprises known to us.¹⁰ Inevitably there is much detail in some of these cases which may seem superfluous for the specific objectives of the study of documentary practice, but it is my belief that taken together these snapshots of Assyrian administration offer a wealth of information which will be of interest to all students of the ancient world, whether they read cuneiform or not, and regardless of whether they are interested in the minutiae of documentary practices. Nevertheless, some readers may find the level of detail excessive and with this in mind I have adopted a suggestion from one of the publisher's reviewers – providing each archive with a short synopsis, which may be enough to explain how it contributes to the overall picture and so enable the reader to bypass the full account without losing the thread. These synopses are placed at the beginning of each archive, and set in italic font to distinguish them from the main text which follows.

The book can therefore be seen as an attempt to kill two birds with one stone, and it also addresses two different audiences. In the belief that nothing is as illuminating as original documents, there are frequent verbatim citations: I have attempted to meet the expectations of specialist colleagues by citing passages in the original Akkadian and including justificatory philological comment where necessary, but also to make the material more accessible to non-Assyriologists by translating all but a few technical terms into English and banishing most of the philology to footnotes. The philology needs to be there, because so few of these archives have so far benefitted from a full textual edition, but for the general reader I have tried to keep it short, and on p. xi have provided a note explaining the conventions adopted for the transcription of Assyrian texts.

After the detailed description of the archives, Chapter 6 takes stock of the evidence which emerges for the social and economic organisation of the state, and examines how it might be reflected in the material archaeological record. This can apply on two levels: generally,

⁹ Spread over a couple of centuries, with all the opportunities for change that implies.

¹⁰ For the rationale of the selection, see pp. 82–3. In some instances, there already existed a study of an archive (e.g. by Weidner at Aššur, by Finkelstein at Tell Billa), but a fresh account was required to suit the purposes of this volume, while in others there is no previous overview and this has made it necessary to write a fairly extensive study.

evidence for the presence or absence of a centralised state structure, and more specifically, the detailed correlation of industrial or agricultural enterprises with the archaeological data. There are well-explored tensions in the coordination of archaeological and written sources, and in the way each can be outflanked by the other, but in the case of Assyria the quantity and variety and the geographical, and to some extent chronological, spread of the written documents means that they can deliver a significant body of coherent data, which stands some chance of permitting a convincing reconstruction within certain limits. In the Middle Assyrian context archaeology does of course have a role to play, complementing the textual sources in areas they cannot reach, but at present the written sources are usually more informative and tend to set the agenda.

Having observed the impact of writing in Assyria, to place this in its historical context it needs to be compared with scribal practice in other places and times. Like Aššur itself the cities of Nuzi and Alalāḫ – just to the east of and far to the west of Aššur – were, for a while, under the hegemony of the Mittanian state and are obvious candidates for comparison. In Chapter 7, as with Assyria, so also at Nuzi in the absence of a substantial general account from one of our specialist “Nuzologists”, there was a need to sketch the political, social and economic background before considering the role of the mass of documentation recovered from the site. In Chapter 8, on the other hand, for Alalāḫ, Ugarit and the Mycenaean world, I have confined myself to issues directly relating to the documentation, since in each case there is copious secondary literature and little consensus about some of the critical aspects of the social order.

Finally, Chapter 9 aims to pull together the evidence for the range and variety of documentation in the ten Middle Assyrian archives, which offer different facets of a single centralised system, and to identify the similarities and differences between Assyria and its neighbours in time and space, leading in the final section to some general reflections on government and the written word.

Introduction

The starting point for this investigation is the discovery of a number of collections of cuneiform tablets left behind by the Assyrians at different places in the centuries from about 1400 to 1000 BC. This is conventionally referred to as the *Middle Assyrian* period, falling as it does between the *Old Assyrian* (roughly 2000–1500 BC) and the *Neo-Assyrian* (roughly 1000–600 BC) periods. These terms are used by philologists to refer to phases in the development of the Assyrian dialect of Akkadian, but they also correspond broadly to different stages in the existence of an Assyrian state, originating at the city of Aššur on the west bank of the Tigris, and governed from there throughout the second millennium BC, although in the first millennium the effective seat of government was transferred northwards, first to Kalḫu, subsequently to Dur-Šarrukīn and finally to Nineveh.

Although in the early second millennium BC the city of Aššur was a significant player on the international scene, as a trading post with widespread interests across the Near East, it was not the capital of a major territorial state. Its citizens operated a long distance commercial enterprise, with branches reaching south to northern Babylonia, eastwards towards the Zagros, and then, most strikingly, northwestwards over the barrier of the Taurus mountains to the network of cities which dominated the Anatolian plateau at this time, primarily Kaneš (Kültepe in Cappadocia), but also others. This extensive commercial network did not survive disruptions in the 17th to 16th centuries BC, and in the 15th century BC Aššur itself was for a while under the hegemony of the recently formed Mittanian kingdom, along with cities like Arrapha (modern Kerkuk) and Nuzi across the Tigris to the east.¹ In a process for which we have very little direct evidence, Aššur gradually emerged from Mittanian and perhaps also Kassite domination, and asserted itself as a regional power: King Aššur-uballiṭ (1363–1328) famously sought and then claimed recognition from the pharaoh in two of the Amarna letters.² Assyrian documents from this time remain scarce, and are principally private legal transactions concerned with land acquisition in the vicinity of Aššur, and not until the 13th century BC do we see significant numbers of texts deriving from the practice of government. Assyria in the 13th century was ruled by just three kings, Adad-nirari I, Shalmaneser I and Tukulti-Ninurta I, under whom the territory directly administered from Aššur was greatly

¹ See [Chapter 7](#). These are probably the two most important Mittanian cities in the trans-Tigris region between the Lower Zab and the Diyala, but few texts have come from Kerkuk, and a large archive was found at a third site excavated by an Iraqi team at Tell al-Fahḫar, probably a *dimtu* in the territory of Kurruḫanni (see Kolinski 2001).

² An excellent summary of the evidence for the early years of the Middle Assyrian state is given in Tenu 2009.

expanded.³ Thus it is that not only at the capital of Aššur, but also at a number of towns within the newly established boundaries of the “land of Aššur”, archaeologists have unearthed collections of cuneiform tablets, some small and some very numerous, which were produced by, and so bear witness to, the activities of the Assyrian administration.

The Royal Palace

To appreciate how the scribes, or perhaps we should say the literate administrators,⁴ of the Assyrian state ran their country, we need to have an idea of the society as a whole and of the fundamental economic conditions under which they operated. The government itself was centred on the royal palace, both as a building and as an institution, and the palace, *ēkallu*, makes its appearance in the documentation owning, distributing and receiving people and commodities, so it is there that our survey of the land of Aššur will start. The palace was by definition a residence of the king, and at any time in the second millennium, except for a brief episode when Tukulti-Ninurta moved to his new foundation at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, the king’s primary residence was at the traditional capital, Aššur. It was not always on the same site. Andrae’s team recovered the Middle Assyrian plan of the “Old Palace” constructed above its early second-millennium predecessor, more or less immediately west of the Aššur Temple. This may have been the “palace of Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe”, presumably built by the king of that name who ruled at the beginning of the 14th century. When in 13th- to 12th-century texts we meet the “New Palace” this presumably refers to the large structure erected by Tukulti-Ninurta in the north-west corner of the old city, of which only the platform survived.⁵ And this may not be all, since one of Tukulti-Ninurta’s palace edicts refers to “palaces in the environs of the Inner City” (*ša li[bīt] Libbi-āli*).⁶

The Palace as a Residence

With the construction of new palaces, the older ones may have ceased to function as the king’s primary residence, although they would surely have remained as part of the royal establishment. Despite the absence of any documentation excavated in one of the palaces at Aššur, it seems likely that an extensive royal family would also have been housed in the same building or complex. The first queen herself was referred to as “the woman of the palace” or even just “the palace”,⁷ while the Court and Harem Edicts (discussed later in this chapter) mention “women of the palace”, who presumably include other “wives of the king” (*aššāt šarri*)⁸ and

³ For their approximate dates see Appendix 1.

⁴ For the difficulties of defining the precise role of the scribes within the administration see pp. 50–1.

⁵ Weidner 1954–6, 259.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 274, l. 42.

⁷ Cf. Postgate 2001c.

⁸ See Weidner 1954–6, 261.

“concubines”.⁹ In addition we know these ladies were served by slave women (*amtu*). In the 12th century Archive of Mutta, we meet some of the royal women of differing status and some of the royal children (although in this particular instance perhaps they were not strictly in the king’s harem but that of his regent, Ninurta-tukul-Aššur).

The Court and Harem Edicts confirm the obvious assumption that access to the palace, especially the domestic sector, was tightly controlled. The concept of the “palace precincts” seems to be expressed with the phrase *kalzi ēkalli*, using a word so far only encountered in this context in both Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian times, but without obvious Akkadian etymology.¹⁰ The gatekeepers (*etû*, *utû*, Weidner 1954–6, 265) no doubt admitted or excluded visitors, while the official called the *rab sikkāti* was probably the “key-holder” for doors kept locked,¹¹ but these will normally have been storerooms of one kind or another, as doors through which human traffic regularly passed would not have been sealed with the peg-and-clay sealing system. Fulfilling their duties effectively was evidently important, as the edicts show.

From an Edict of Tiglath-pileser I

*šum-ma lu-ú GAL É.GAL-lim [š]a URU ŠÀ URU
lu-ú NIMGIR É.GAL-lim lu-ú GAL za-ri-q^{mes}
ša hu-ú-li lu-ú a-su-ú ša be-ta-[a-]nu ù lu-ú
ša UGU É.GAL.MEŠ-te [š]a šid-di KUR-ti gab-bu
ma-zi-iz pa-ni la-a mar-ru-ra a-na É.GAL-lim
ul-te-ri-bu ur-ki-[i]š e-ta-am-ru [š]a^{lu} qe-pu-te^{mes}
an-nu-ú-te 1.TA.ÀM GÌR.MEŠ-šu-nu ú-ba-at-tu-qu*

If either the Palace Overseer of the Inner City
or the Palace Herald or the Chief Usher of
the road, or the Privy Doctor, or a Supervisor of
all the Palaces across the extent of the land, has
allowed an uncastrated courtier to enter a palace
and later they have found (him), they shall sever
one foot of (each of) these representatives.

Weidner 1954–6, No. 20, Tafel XI, 23–6.

Some of the edicts refer to behaviour while the royal court is on the road: in this situation the palace overseer obviously is not present, and the responsibility for the conduct of the court is in the hands of the “chief usher of the road” (*rab zāriqī ša hūli*, Edict No. 20, just quoted). That the court did move around the country is vividly demonstrated by letters found at Durkatlimmu dealing with the arrangements for the arrival of King Tukulti-Ninurta. The party includes six wagons transporting a variety of female members of his household, including the queen, two of her sisters, thirteen other women who are either “our own ladies” (DUMU.MUNUS.MEŠ SIG₅ *ni-a-tu*) or Kassite ladies, two flour-processers (*alahhinātu*) and another woman of obscure function. The king himself and his party, including the Kassite king and his wife, are apparently still en route at Apku.¹²

⁹ Using the word *esirāte*, probably meaning “enclosed women”, which is also found in texts from Nuzi and Hattusa; Landsberger 1935–6, 144–5. Note how in the Šattiwaza treaty the ruler is allowed to take only one principal wife (the daughter of the Hittite king), but as many concubines (*esirāte*) as he chooses (Landsberger 1935–6, 145; Beckman 1996, 40).

¹⁰ For Neo-Assyrian see CAD K, 108b; the Middle Assyrian occurrence is in an edict of Aššur-uballit (Weidner 1954–6, 268; Satzung 1:4).

¹¹ For the “pegs” and the *rab sikkāti*, see Radner 2010.

¹² Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 10.

The Palace as the Seat of Government

The palace, while serving as a residence, also accommodated a variety of the activities of government. It was the forum for the reception of individuals and delegations from home and abroad, provided storage for valuable items and offered some kind of work or living space for administrative personnel. Unfortunately, despite the recovery of the impressive plan of the “Old Palace”,¹³ the remains do not betray many clues to the use made of different sectors of the building, in particular, no palace administrative archives have been recovered from there, so this can only be an assumption, although the Archive of Mutta gives a snapshot of some of the visitors received at the site over the course of a year. There is no doubt, though, that institutionally the central state administration was carried out in the name of “the palace”. Thus state-owned commodities which are the subject of transactions are described as *ša ēkalli*, “belonging to the palace”, where in other commercial documents we would read the name of the owner or creditor. The “palace” is therefore an authority, a legal persona or abstract entity, as well as a physical establishment.¹⁴ Often this phrase is followed by *ša qāt PN*, “in the charge (lit. hand) of PN”, which gives us the name of the responsible official, who is thus acting as an employee of the palace. Some such employees have this role explicitly recognised in their titles: “palace scribe”, “palace overseer” (*rab ēkalli*), “Palace Herald” or “slave of the palace”, and some of them certainly were active on the premises of one or more palaces. Others, like the courtiers (*mazzaz pāni*), undoubtedly functioned in the palace, but they did not have this role regularly expressed in their titles. Moreover, other officials worked for the palace but not actually inside it: in the cases of the Chief Steward and of Mutta, who undoubtedly both handled palace business, there is reason to think neither of these officials actually operated within the four walls of an official palace, although their archives were found in adjacent areas. It is therefore very difficult to be sure how much of the palace’s business was transacted within the confines of the palace, if defined as a single building complex, and how many of the palace’s staff members or indeed how much of the palace’s property we should expect to find within its four walls.

Although, therefore, we have a number of administrative archives from Aššur at this time, these are in one sense or another “outliers” which illustrate branches of the state’s administration in action, such as the documents from the Chief Steward close to but not architecturally integrated with the palace building. The provenance of a variety of literary and scientific texts in the later debris in the north-eastern part of the city, from the Aššur temple westwards,¹⁵ suggests the palace(s) here may have housed a library, but because some of the state’s core administration was housed apart from the palace proper, it is hard to know which other sectors may also have been distributed elsewhere. It is conceivable that the bulk of administrative documentation was written in separate buildings, or, even if it was initially generated by scribes working in a palace, would have been transferred sooner or later to the “Tablet House”.¹⁶

¹³ See Miglus 1989; 2004.

¹⁴ Cf. Machinist 1982, 20, referring back to Garelli 1967.

¹⁵ See Pedersén 1986, 12–28 Archive N1.

¹⁶ See p. 49.

Provincial Palaces

Outside Aššur, the administration of the state was delegated to the governors appointed by the king, and they resided in and carried out their administration from provincial palaces.¹⁷ These are sometimes referred to collectively as “palaces across the extent of the land” (*ša šiddi māti*), as illustrated by this account of Tiglath-pileser I’s:¹⁸

É.GAL.MEŠ-te šu-bat LUGAL-ti
 ša ma-ḥa-za-ni GAL.MEŠ-te
 ša ši-di KUR-ti-ia gab-be ša iš-tu
 tar-ši AD.MEŠ-ia i-na MU.MEŠ-te
 dan-na-te um-da-ši-ra-ma e-na-ḥa-ma
 i’-ab-ta DÜ-uš ú-šek-lil
 BĀD.MEŠ KUR-ti-ia an-šu-te
 ak-še-er GIŠ.APIN.MEŠ i-na nap-ḥar KUR^a-a-šur
 gab-be ú-šèr-ki-is ù ta-ab-ka
 ša ŠE-im^{mes} a-na ša AD.MEŠ-ia
 lu ú-ter lu at-bu-uk
 su-gul-lat ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ GU^a.MEŠ ANŠE.MEŠ
 ša i-na GIŠ.TUKUL-ti^a a-šur EN-ia
 i-na KUR.KUR.MEŠ ša a-pe-lu-ši-na-ti
 ki-šit-ti qa-ti-ia
 šá al-qa-a ak-šur

I completed the (re)construction of the
 palaces, royal residences, of the great cities
 throughout the whole extent of my land,
 which from the time of my fathers in
 years of hardship had been abandoned,
 dilapidated and destroyed.
 I repaired the weakened ramparts of my
 land. I had ploughs harnessed in the
 entire land of Aššur, and I stored up
 storage of grain in excess of that of my
 fathers.
 I formed herds of horses, oxen and
 donkeys, which I had received as the
 spoil of my own hands with the support
 of Aššur my lord in the countries which I
 rule.

Grayson 1991, 26 Col. vi.94–vii.4

At Ḥarbu (Tell Chuera), Durkatlimmu (Tell Sheikh Hamad) and Šibaniba (Tell Billa), state ownership of a commodity was consistently expressed by the phrase “of the palace”, and in each case the state archives were found in the palace, high on the principal mound near its steeply sloping edge. This was presumably the governor’s official residence, and we may reasonably assume many of the officials and scribes worked on the premises, if they did not actually sleep and eat there. By contrast, on Ili-pada’s farmstead at Tell Sabi Abyad on the river Baliḥ at the western extremity of the land of Aššur, although there is no doubt that the settlement and its administrators occupied the top of the mound, the establishment is not referred to as “the palace”, maintaining its status as, nominally at least, discrete from the state’s enterprise. This agrees with usage in the first millennium, when “the palace” (*ēkallu*)

¹⁷ This is perhaps the place to correct a false impression conveyed by my phrase “the government was in the hands of a number of ‘houses’ which ... were run along commercial lines” (Postgate 1979c, 202); this has been taken by Machinist (1982, 29–33) to imply that the power was in the hands of these houses, whereas my meaning was rather that the administration was in their hands. So I would not maintain that as a general rule “the Aššur families controlled the provincial government in oligarchic fashion”, although we cannot be sure this was never the case.

¹⁸ Similar but rather less elaborate statements were often included in their annals by his successors down to and including Shalmaneser III in the later 9th century, for example Tukulti-Ninurta II: “I built palaces across the extent of my land, and hitched ploughs across the extent of my land; I stored up in greater quantities than previously stores of grain for the needs of my land, and I added land to the land of Aššur and people to its people” (Grayson 1991, 178).

referred exclusively to the king's residences, and not to grand establishments built for highly placed members of the royal family or the government.¹⁹

Thus it is that although for some sectors of the state's administration there is an information vacuum at the centre, this can be filled in part by archives coming from the provinces, especially from Durkatlimmu and Tell Chuera, where most if not all government scribal activity would have been concentrated in a single building serving as the governor's residence, and would have been responsible for state programmes such as those described by Tiglath-pileser. However, before describing in detail the content of the different archives at Aššur and in the countryside, a brief survey of the land regime and social make-up of Assyria taken from a variety of sources will help to place the state's activities in context.

People

Since the information we meet in all state archives is either explicitly or implicitly a record of human actions and interactions, every archive contributes to our understanding of the agency of humans in the structure of the state, and an understanding of the role of different members of society is a necessary precondition for understanding the system as a whole.

Personal Identity and Origin

In Middle Assyrian scribal practice individuals' names are normally introduced by the single vertical wedge (*Personenkeil*) for male names and the female determinative (MUNUS) for women. Only in filiations immediately after DUMU ("son of") is the masculine determinative regularly, and after KIŠIB ("seal of") often, omitted. In private legal or commercial documents, individuals are normally given their father's, and sometimes also their paternal grandfather's name.²⁰ It is likely that the inclusion of the father's name signals "their social status as free-born",²¹ and the concept of a free man (*a'īlu*) is implicit in the Middle Assyrian Laws, where the wording may define the social status of a "woman" (*sinniltu*) by describing her as "the wife of a (free) man" or "the daughter of a (free) man" (e.g. Tablet A §2). In witness lists at the end of legal documents, witnesses are regularly given their father's name, and where this is omitted there is probably a reason. Thus in KAJ 51 (Postgate 1988a, No. 16) two of the witnesses have their patronymics as usual, whereas the first witness, Mannu-gir-Aššur, has no patronymic but is given the designation *aluzinnu*, one of a group of professions associated with cultic performances, sometimes rendered "juggler". Professions are mentioned only exceptionally in witness lists, and in this case his profession very likely substituted for a

¹⁹ See Postgate 2004b, 218b.

²⁰ Private legal documents may mention grandfathers, for example at Tell Billa and in the Babu-aḥa-iddina land sale texts (Freydank & Saporetti 1989, KAJ 158 and 159; here Nos. 31 and 36), or KAJ 7 from the 14th century Ass. 14446 archives. Presumably in most administrative contexts the identity of the individuals involved was fairly obvious, and grandparents' names must have been quite superfluous.

²¹ Phrase from Wiggermann 2000, 189 (though note that he is there talking about farmers he calls "free-born dependents").

patronymic because he did not belong to a normal patriarchal family and thus had no known father (or perhaps even mother).²²

In contrast to legal documents, in administrative texts and even in sealed bilateral documents from state archives patronymics are widely omitted.²³ Thus in the Babu-aḫa-iddina Archive only in the two land sale documents do we find the names of his father and grandfather given. The omission of patronymics can no doubt be attributed to two factors – the restricted social context in which administrative documentation was produced, which precludes doubts about the identity of the individuals involved, and the greater formality of the legal and commercial transactions which needed to hold their own in the context of public law. Unfortunately, we are not always as familiar as the scribes were with the social contexts, and the lack of filiations in the administrative archives is often frustrating.

Occasionally in both legal and administrative texts a person's home town or ethnic group will be mentioned rather than the father's name. Thus in KAJ 101, a sealed and witnessed document, a farmstead is named after Ninuayu, a Burudaeon, the ethnic term here substituting for a patronymic.²⁴ In their administrative records the government scribes did not practise any rigid consistency: in MARV 4.1, for instance, a list of “29 captured? workers” (ÉRIN.MEŠ *šabbutūtu*), some are just listed with their names, others are given a profession (“baker”, “gardener”, “goldsmith”, “priest” and an *aluzinnu*), and others receive an ethnic tag (*kaš-ši-ú*, i.e. Babylonian, or *šu-ub-ri-ú*, i.e. Hurrian); only one of them has a patronymic. Nomads or transhumants were predominantly of Aramaean stock, and are sometimes referred to merely as “a Sution”, without even their name recorded, but not infrequently the “Sution” after their names may be further qualified by a more specific tribal affiliation as in “Yurian Sution” or “Taḫabaeon Sution”.²⁵

Social and Legal Status

One rather special gentilic is “Assyrian” (*aššurāyu*, *aššurāyittu*), a term whose occasional usage has proved difficult to interpret. It was thought for a time, on the basis of occurrences

²² For *aluzinnu* in MA texts, see Jakob 2003, 465–6. The textual attestations for this term are discussed by Römer, and the lexical evidence in particular suggests that the *aluzinnu* was some kind of performer of the kind often associated with cultic activities, but does not tell us much about his social standing. It may be significant that in two Old Babylonian references (Römer 1975–8, 50) he is associated with work teams, and a role in providing “entertainment for the troops” would explain the appearance of *aluzinnu* in the lists of workers employed at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, for which see Freydank 1976a, 116–18 (citing VAT 18007 and 18099). This would be along the lines suggested by Freydank (117³⁵), when he cites F. Hinkel's observation that in Sudan to this day one meets individuals whose task it is to give rhythm to a working party by singing, a phenomenon I observed myself at Al-Hiba in 1971 while a guest of Prof. Donald Hansen, when intensive work on removal of a large brick platform overlying an Early Dynastic temple was accompanied by one of the workmen singing, or rather keening, in a high nasal voice. For iconographic evidence (which may or may not relate to the *aluzinnu*), cf. Blocher 1992. Since then a number of mentions have emerged from the Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta workforce texts, often in the same context as soldiers (*hurād(āt)u*), runners (KAS₄.MEŠ) and builders (ŠITIM.MEŠ): MARV 4.91:19'; 4.42:9 (5 *a-lu-zi-ni*); 4.86:13' with envelope 4.29:3'; 4.102.iii.10'; 6.74:2 (3 *a-lu-zi-nu*; wrong Ass. no.?). 8.38:12.

²³ Compare at Nuzi: “in the legal records, Šar-Teššup's name is accompanied by the patronymic, whereas in the administrative documents the name usually appears alone” (Negri Scafa 2009a, 439⁸).

²⁴ Postgate 1988a, No. 55.

²⁵ See Postgate 1979b, 92–3; 1981, 51–4; Faist 2001, 186–7 citing customs receipts from Kulišhinaš for animals purchased from “a Sution” or “a Y(a)urian Sution” (in each case without even a personal name).

in the Middle Assyrian Laws, that it could refer to a social status with diminished legal rights, but this no longer seems likely.²⁶ Instead, it does seem to be used in legal documents to indicate persons with Assyrian ancestry, in contexts where they find themselves under legal or social constraints which are the result of economic distress rather than the consequence of being “Assyrian”. That being Assyrian was a significant and precise condition emerges from other documents, such as a sadly damaged text from the Stewards’ Archive which probably records proceedings presided over by Ušur-namkur-šarri, who held a range of high government posts under Tukulti-Ninurta I:

[¹]PAB- <i>nam-kur</i> -LUGAL ¹ IR ¹ [.....	Ušur-namkur-šarri x[.....]
<i>a-ta-mar</i> ¹ PAB- <i>nam-kur</i> -[LUGAL	I saw. Ušur-namkur-[šarri]
<i>a-na pa-ni</i> ¹ DUMU.ÚS- ⁴ IM[	before Apil-Adad[.....]
ù DUMU.MEŠ URU ša ^{urute} -[	and the citizens of the city of Te[.....]
<i>ul-ta-zi-za-a-n-ni ma-a</i> L[Ú [?]	made me stand, saying [.....]
<i>ma-a áš-šu-ra-iu-ú a-na ku-ma</i> a [?] -.....	“I am Assyrian [.....]
<i>ki-i áš-šu-ra-iu-ú a-na ku-ni</i> x[.....]	that I am Assyrian [and that]
<i>an-na-bi-da-ni aq-ti-bi</i> [	I fled, I said. [.....]
¹ PAB- <i>nam-kur</i> -LUGAL <i>a-na</i> KUR ⁴ <i>a-šur</i> ^k [ⁱ	Ušur-namkur-šarri [brought me (back)] to Assyria.”

MARV 3.63:4’–12’

Fragmentary though this is, it seems to show clearly that the point at issue was the speaker’s status as “an Assyrian”, a fact which could be established, after which he may have perhaps been repatriated by the good offices of Ušur-namkur-šarri. Of course “Assyrian” was also used where the person’s precise status was not so central: another Assyrian fugitive (*munṣabdu*) is mentioned in MARV 4.30 rev., fleeing either to or from Karduniaš (Babylonia), and we find Assyrians in a general sense alongside other gentiles such as “Sutians” or “Šubrians”.²⁷ The statement that “I seized the donkey in the hands of an Assyrian” shows that Assyrians must have differed in some recognisable way from others (such as Sutians, perhaps).²⁸ More difficult to interpret is the mention of several chests of tablets in the family archive of Urad-Šerua recording various categories of debts incumbent on Assyrians (e.g. sheep: 1 *qu-pu* UDU. MEŠ ša UGU *áš-šu-ra-ie-e*). Given that this family was based at Aššur, one might be tempted to think this meant “inhabitants of the city of Aššur”, but with nothing other than the syllabic rendering of the gentilic /*aššurāyu*/ (and no preceding logogram for “city”) it is hard to see how this would have been differentiated from the more general ethnic or geographical designation implying “inhabitant of Assyria”. By contrast, KAV 217, recording statements made in a legal context, involves “Aššur-ians” who had taken an oath to the king: there are two mentions of a group, written URU ⁴*a-šur-a-iu*.MEŠ (ll. 10’, 16’), and one of a single

²⁶ In this I concur with Roth 1995, 192 note 1, citing Driver & Miles 1935, 284–6, who does not agree that persons designated Assyrian “were members of a class socially, legally or economically inferior to the *a’ilu*” (so still Cardascia 1969, e.g. p. 301). She concludes: “The distinction is not borne out in the provisions in the MAL that refer to the *aššurāju*, ... or in other contemporary Middle Assyrian texts.”

²⁷ For example at Tell Chuera: Jakob 2009 No. 9:6 “1 Sution ... and 1 Assyrian with him” (1 *áš-šu-ra-iu il-te-šu*), or No. 13:35 “either Assyrian or Babylonian” (*lu-ú áš-šu-ra-iu-ú lu-ú kaš-[ši-ú]*).

²⁸ Hall 1983, 19.

“Aššur-ian” (URU ^d*a-šur-a-iu* l. 13). The presence of URU here in all three instances suggests that it was not a mere determinative, but stands for *āl(u)*,²⁹ indicating that this specifically means citizens of the city of Aššur and should be distinguished from plain *aššurāyu*, which would have a wider meaning.³⁰ While being Assyrian was evidently a recognisable and at times important status, it is hard for us to know what range of meanings it might encompass, and we should perhaps resist the temptation to assign it one precise value in all contexts. This is particularly frustrating in the case of the “payments of the Assyrians” listed in the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive, although there too the gentilic */aššurāyu/* is conspicuous for its lack of either KUR or URU preceding.

Debt Slavery

While it is possible that “Assyrian” carried with it the implication of “free-born citizen of Aššur” or “of Assyria”, it is not clear how this would relate to the concept of “(free) man” (*a’īlu*). However, *a’īlu* (and probably *a’iltu* “(free) woman”, although this is not at present attested in Middle Assyrian sources) should be understood to contrast with “slave” (*urdu*), in its technical sense, and *amtu* “female slave”. The existence of household slaves is demonstrated by legal sale documents in which ownership of a male or female slave is transferred from seller to purchaser, and by Tablet A of the Middle Assyrian Laws where *urdu* and *amtu* are mentioned together and plainly belong together in a legally recognised category distinct from the free man (*a’īlu*) and his wife and daughter.

Some of these slaves will be normal chattel slaves working in a household and quite possibly born to parents in the same circumstances. However, private legal documents provide clear evidence for the existence of a range of servile conditions which did not amount to full slavery, and were usually related to debt. When taking a loan it was normal for the debt to be secured by a pledge, and this was mostly either land or a person, both referred to in Middle Assyrian as *šapartu*.³¹ Failure to repay in accordance with the contract could lead to at least temporary servitude, and there is also the possibility that the debtor would immediately begin a period of service in the creditor’s household in lieu of interest. Two documents referring to release from such circumstances serve to illustrate some of the various situations attested.

²⁹ Though with Assyrian dialect one must be cautious about accepting automatically the Babylonian value of logograms, syllabic writings like *a-la-iu-ú* (KAJ 7) tend to confirm *ālu* as the value of URU.

³⁰ See Freydank 1992b for the edition of this text; he does not go into the precise implication of “Assyrian” in this text, however.

³¹ The Middle Assyrian pledge documents were first seriously studied by Koschaker, whose work was summarised and extended by Eichler (1973, 88–95). For a comprehensive study see now Abraham 2001. We must presumably allow for the existence of many loans which were secured not by land or person, for which written documentation would be needed in the case of a consequent transfer of ownership, but by movable property which required no such title deeds. See now Saporetti 2012.

KAJ 7: Marriage of Freed Woman

KIŠIB munus a-su-at-d[IDIGNA ()]

[munus a-su-at-d]IDIGNA DUMU.MUNUS ʾx x¹
 [1DINGIR]-m[a]-i-ri-ba ʾR ša 1.dMAR.[TU-na-]šir
 iš-tu Ê 1.d a-šur-re-šú-ia
 DUMU ʾĠ.ĠÁL-DINGIR ip-tu-ra-š[i?]
 a-na KA-ša-ma ša munus a-su-at-dIDIGNA
 1DINGIR-ma-i-ri-ba ʾR 1.dMAR.TU-na-šir
 i-na a-mu-[u]t-ti-ša uz-zak-ki-ši
 a-na aš-šu-ut-ti-šu il-ta-ka-an
 1DINGIR-ma-i-ri-ba mu-ut-ša
 ù munus a-su-at-dIDIGNA DAM-sú
 a-di bal-tu-ni A.ŠA ù l[ib-bi] URU
 pa-la-aḥ a-ḥa-iš e-pu-[šu]
 ša i-na be-ri-šu-nu i-ʾpaⁿ-[si-lu-n]i
 3 MA.NA šar-pa [i-ḥi-aṭ]
 ki-i-mu-ú [
 i-na a-mu-ut-ti
 ù a-na aš-šu-ut-ti
 iš-ku-nu-ši [
 munus a-su-at-d[IDIGNA]
 ù li-da-nu-[ša ()]
 a-la-iu-ú ša 1.dMAR.T[U-na-šir]
 ù DUMU.MEŠ-šú šu-nu [()]
 il-ka ša a-la-iu-ú-t[i]
 a-na 1.dMAR.TU-na-šir
 ù DUMU.MEŠ-šú il-lu-ku
 ù 1.dMAR.TU-na-šir ù DUMU.MEŠ-[šú]
 munus a-su-at-dIDIGNA ù li-da-ni-[ša]
 a-na a-mu-ti ù ur-du-ti la i-ša-[bu-tu]
 ù tup-pu ša NA₄.KIŠIB 1.d a-šur-re-šú-ia
 ša ip-ti-ri ša munus a-su-at-dIDIGNA
 ša za-ka-i-ša i-na Ê
 1.dMAR.TU-na-šir-ma ša-ak-na-at
 (witnesses and date)

Seal of Asuat-Digla [()]

(space for seal impression)

[Asuat]-Digla, daughter [of Nirbiya] –

[Ilu]ma-iriba, slave of Amur[ru-na]šir

released her from the house of

Aššur-rešuya, son of Ibašši-ilu.

With the consent of Asuat-Digla herself

Iluma-iriba, slave of Amurru-našir,

has cleared her from her slavewoman status,

and appointed her to the status of his wife.

Iluma-iriba is her husband,

Asuat-Digla is his wife.

They shall show respect for one another

in countryside and town so long as they live.

Whoever intervenes between them

[shall pay out] three minas of silver.

In return for [they have cleared her]

from her slavewoman [status], and

have appointed her to the st[atus of a wife].

Asuat-Digla

and her offspring [()]

are the villagers of Amurru-[našir]

and his sons.

For Amurru-našir

and his sons they shall perform

the state service of villager-status,

but Amurru-našir and [his] sons shall

not sei[ze] Asuat-Digla and [her] offspring

for slavewoman status or slave status.

And the tablet with the seal of Aššur-rešuya,

concerning the release-payment of Asuat-Digla

for her clearance, is deposited in the house

of the same Amurru-našir.

This “tablet with the seal of Aššur-rešuya” must be Ass. 14446ce published as KAJ 167. It is from the same year (and very likely written 3 days earlier although the month name in KAJ 7 is broken), and acknowledges his receipt of the release payment paid by Iluma-iriba for Asuat-Digla, in the form of another woman, either named Šubrittu or simply described as “a Šubrian woman”, which was evidently a precondition of the marriage contract. It gives a few further details which enlarge the picture: Asuat-Digla’s father was called Nirbiya, and she was an Assyrian (*aššurāyittu*) who had been taken into the household of Aššur-rešuya under a “keep alive and take” arrangement (*balluṭ ū liqi*).³²

³² *Balluṭ u liqi* should perhaps be taken as a pair of substantives in the status absolutus (cf. von Soden AHw 555b who assigns this as a hapax to liqu II).

Taken together these two documents attest to the existence of an economically deprived sector of Assyrian society made up of originally free citizens obliged by poverty to tie themselves to richer families. Asuat-Digla was probably placed by her parents in the household of Aššur-rešuya under an arrangement familiar from other periods of Mesopotamian history and frequent enough to be treated in the Middle Assyrian Laws (Tablet A §39), whereby the receiving family undertook to support (*ba/ulluṭu(m)* “to keep alive”) a child in return for exercising some rights over it.³³ She is here allowed to contract a marriage with a slave in the household of Amurru-našir, but although they are not to be his slaves, they will be his “villagers”, and this implies that they will be liable to perform the state service (*ilku*), presumably attached to the land they will cultivate on behalf of the Amurru-našir family.³⁴ That she will be under some legal constraint from Amurru-našir follows unequivocally from the fact that it is he who will be retaining in his house the tablet recording her release and it is she who has to roll her seal on KAJ 7 to signify her assent to the contract.

A different type of economic servitude is illustrated by another document from Ass. 14446 in which Amurru-našir is involved, published as MARV 1.37. The essence of this text is also worth quoting in full.

KIŠIB dMAR.TU–PAB

(seal impression)

^{1.d}UTU–*am-ra-ni* DUMU *e-rib*–DINGIR

i-na mi-ig-rat ra-mi-ni-šu

a-di 10 MU.MEŠ *i-na É* ^{1.d}MAR.TU–PAB

DUMU ^{1.d}*a-šur-i-qī-ša ú-šab*

DAM–*ta ú-ša-aḥ-ḥa-zu*

i-na É ^{1.d}MAR.TU–PAB–*ma*

e-kal ul-ta-ba-aš

10 MU.MEŠ *ú-šal-lam-ma*

DAM–*sú la-bu-ul-ta*

ù ra-ki-il-ta

i-laq-qé ù it-ta-lak

ša i-na be-ri-šu-nu i-pa-si-lu-ni

5 MA.NA *šar-pu*

Ì.Ì.Á.É

(witnesses and date)

Seal of Amurru-našir

Šamaš-amranni, son of Erib-ili,

of his own volition

will dwell for 10 years in the house

of Amurru-našir son of Aššur-iqiša.

They will let him marry a wife

and in the house of Amurru-našir

he will eat and be clothed.

(When) he has completed 10 years

he will take his wife, clothing,

and *rakiltu*,³⁵

and depart.

Whoever intervenes between them

shall pay out 5 minas of silver.

MARV 1.37:1–16

As suggested in an earlier edition and discussion of this transaction,³⁶ this seems to be a case where both sides benefit, and Amurru-našir’s seal on the tablet means that it will furnish Šamaš-amranni with a guarantee that he will receive his reward after completing the 10 years. There may of course have been a second document sealed by Šamaš-amranni which might be

³³ See Oppenheim 1955, 71–5.

³⁴ See for the “villagers” CAD A/I, 391, and pp. 21–7 for the *ilku* system.

³⁵ The meaning is not known. CAD R, 108–9 is uncertain but suggests “bundle” (lit. “tied (container)”). In 1979b, 93 I translated “contract(?)” but also raised the possibility that it could mean “equipment, accoutrements” or the like.

³⁶ Postgate 1979b, 93–5.

more explicit in specifying what services Amurru-našir could claim in return from Šamaš-amranni. Arrangements of this kind are not unique to Assyria: there is a strong resemblance to the story of Jacob and Laban in the Old Testament, and the *tidennūtu* contracts at Nuzi are concerned with contracts for personal service.³⁷ What this agreement and the situation in KAJ 7 and KAJ 167 have in common is that we see an originally free member of society – Asuat-Digla, or Šamaš-amranni – entering another household in a subservient status, and then in due course being released, either by a release payment or a 10-year limit built into the arrangement. However, in Asuat-Digla's case, the release is not absolute because she and her children will remain “villagers” (*ālāyū*) of Amurru-našir and his children, and are thereby obliged to perform the *ilku* duties attached to their status as dependent villagers, to all appearances in perpetuity.

Displaced Persons and Dependent Workers

From Aššur, but also from Tell Chuera and Durkatlimmu, we have a range of lists of family groups of dependent personnel, sometimes characterised as “booty” (*šallutu*)³⁸ or “deportees” (*našhūtu*). The deportation of the population from conquered territories was practised by the Hittite kings. In their royal inscriptions the Middle Assyrian kings mention it only very occasionally: Shalmaneser claims to have blinded and taken captive 14,400 people from Ḫanigalbat after defeating Šattuara, and Tukulti-Ninurta “uprooted” 28,800 “Hittites” from his campaign west of the Euphrates and moved them into “my land”.³⁹ Independent confirmation that such deportations did take place is provided by administrative documents concerned with the maintenance of large numbers of deportees.⁴⁰ During the reign of Shalmaneser one of the tasks of Melisaḥ and his son Urad-Šerua, as provincial governors, was to organise the distribution of barley rations from the local palaces to deportees on the upper Ḫabur.⁴¹ Many deportees were employed in the construction of Tukulti-Ninurta's new capital, Port Tukulti-Ninurta. Administrative texts recording the issue of grain rations to them (and to other works) were recovered from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, and some of these listing Hurrian families are analysed in detail in Freydank 1980. After Tukulti-Ninurta's conquest of Babylon, not only the Kassite king and his court, but also numbers of Kassite deportees found their way to Assyria. In a letter in a sealed envelope from the Archive of Ubru addressed to a provincial governor we learn something of the conditions they experienced.⁴²

³⁷ Eichler 1973; Abraham 2001.

³⁸ As in KAJ 180 (Postgate 1988a, No. 70), and Tell Chuera No. 64 (see p. 287).

³⁹ Shalmaneser I: RIMA1 p. 184, 74–5 4 ŠĀR *bal-tu-ti-šu-nu ú-né-pil aš-lu-ul*. Tukulti-Ninurta I: RIMA 1, p. 275: 23–5 *i-na šur-ru GIŠ.GU.ZA MAN-ti-ia* 8 ŠĀR ÉRIN.MEŠ *ḫa-ti-i iš-tu e-ber-te ÍD pur-rat-ti as-su-ḫa-ma a-na ŠĀ KUR-ia ú-ra-a*. On the question of whether these captives were in fact blinded, see Garelli et al. (1982), who understand it to mean unskilled.

⁴⁰ And by Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta documents listed for example in Galter 1988, 228.

⁴¹ The relevant texts in the Urad-Šerua archive are fully treated in Saporetti 1970b; the texts are also edited in Postgate 1988a.

⁴² Pedersén archive M8 No. 53, from the jar found south-west of the younger city wall (bB61); no. 146 in the edition of Llop-Radua 2009; the seal impression is also published there on Taf. 11.

a-na ¹*bal-<ti->-li-bur* EN-*ni*
tup-pí ¹*mu*-SIG₅-^d*a-šur*
ù ¹*i-gar-še-me-ed* ĪR.MEŠ-*ka*
nu-ul-ta-ka-in a-na di-na-an
EN-*ni* *ni-ta-lak*
a-na EN-*ni* GIŠ.GIGIR-*šu* ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ-*šu*
ù *pa-ḫi-te* *ša* EN-*ni* *lu šul-mu*
an-na-ka a-na ĒRIN.MEŠ *kaš-ši-e*
ša i+na ^{ur}*kal-ḫi us-bu-ni šul-mu*
^{1.d}UTU-KAR *it-tal-ka i+na* UD.5.KÁM
ŠUKU-*ta it-ti-din* 1 *šu-ši* 6 ANŠE 3BÁN 7½ SĪLA ŠE
ŠUKU ĒRIN.MEŠ *ša* EN-*ia* *ša* 1 ITI UD.MEŠ
ni-ta-ḫa-ar a-na É *ḫa-ši-me*
ni-ta-ba-ka ši-pa-si-ni
ni-ta-ḫa-aš la ni-di-na-šu-nu
ki-i *ša* EN-*ni*
i-ša-pa-ra-ni
šu-nu 1 SĪLA.TA.ĀM
2 ITI.TA.ĀM *i-la-qu-tu²-ni*
e'-ku-lu la ba-ri-ú
UZU 2-*šu iš-tu* ^{ur}*ni-nu-a*
it-tab-lu-ni la i-di-nu-na-ši
ĒRIN.MEŠ *mar-šu-tu i-ba-áš-ši*
X-*ri-ti lib-bi e-ri-šu*
MUN *la-áš-šu áš-šúm* ŠUKU-*at*
ĒRIN.MEŠ *ša* ITI *an-ni-e*
ša maḫ-ru-ú-ni
ni-da-na-šu-nu-ú
ki-i *ša* *ṭé-mu-ni* EN-*li*
li-iš-pu-ra
i+na lib-bi 3 ME 50 ĒRIN.MEŠ
ša ŠU EN-*ia* 4 LÚ.MEŠ *ša* KIN
2 LÚ.MEŠ *tal-mi-du*
3 LÚ.MEŠ *pír-su* 2 LÚ.MEŠ *ša* GAB
4 MUNUS.MEŠ *ša* KIN
1 MUNUS *tal-mi-tu* 4 MUNUS *pír-su*
ŠU.NÍGIN 19 ĒRIN.MEŠ *ša* ITI *kal-mar-te*
me-tu-ni ĒRIN.MEŠ *an-nu-tu*
mar-šu-tu *ša* ŠĀ GIŠ.MÁ
DUG LU LUGAL *la i-di-nu*

To Balti-libur our lord,
 Tablet of Mudammeq-Aššur
 and Igaršemed, your servants.
 We have done obeisance and in lieu
 of our lord have gone.
 With our lord, his chariot and his horses
 and the office of our lord may it be well.
 Here it is well with the Kassite people
 who are dwelling in Kalḫu.
 Šamaš-šezib came (and) issued
 ration(s) on the 5th day. We received 66.375
 homers of grain (as) rations for the people
 of my lord for 1 month (and) are storing it in
 the granary. We have applied our sealings and did
 not issue (it) to them – (we will do)
 however our lord sends (instructions).

They will collect² 1 *qū* each (daily²)
 for 2 months each;
 they are eating, not hungry.
 Twice they have brought meat
 from Nineveh. They did not give us (any).
 There are some sick people,
 they requested ... of heart (?).⁴³
 There is no salt. As for the rations of
 the people for this month,
 who/which have been received,
 shall we issue (them) to them?
 Let my lord send (instructions) in line
 with his decision.
 Out of 350 people who are in the charge
 of my lord: 4 men of work(ing age);
 2 male apprentices;
 3 males, weaned; 2 males unweaned;
 4 women of work(ing age);
 1 female apprentice; 4 females, weaned;
 Total: 19 people who died in the month
 of Kalmartu.
 These sick people inside the boat
 did not give ... the king

MARV 1.71

Although the text does not explicitly refer to these “Kassites” as deportees (*našḫūtu*), it seems clear that this is what they were. Evidently the state is concerned for their welfare, for

⁴³ The sign at the beginning of the line resembles *nir* or *šaḫ* but neither of these gives obvious sense.

whatever motive, and we may compare MARV 1.27 (+MARV 3.54), where a variety of recipients are on the receiving end of an issue of wool totalling 221 talents (about 6,630 kg) issued “on the command of the king as a gift (*ki-i ri-mu-ut-te*)” (l. 35). Most of the wool goes to three groups of deportees – Šubrians, Katmuḥaeans and Nairians – but some goes to individual builders (LÚ.ŠITIM.MEŠ) and architects,⁴⁴ no doubt all engaged on work at the new capital, Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta.

The condition of deportee cannot have been a permanent status, and it seems likely that in most cases such people would have ended up as *šiluḥlu*, a word of Hurrian origin which refers to a class of dependent labourers, the significance of which has only gradually emerged over the past quarter century as fresh Middle Assyrian texts have been published, in particular those from Tell Sabi Abyad. There, on the extensive estate of Ili-pada in the Baliḥ valley, lists of workers fall into two categories: one is freeborn farmers, where, to quote Wiggermann, the names are practically all “good Assyrian”, and all have their father’s name listed, while the other category is dependent workers designated *šiluḥlu*, whose names are usually “foreign” and whose patronymic is not given.⁴⁵ When such groups of non-Assyrians – whether already *šiluḥlu* or still classed as booty or deportees, or even free families – are under the control (and also the care) of the state administration, the scribes devised a detailed and consistent terminology for describing both the adults and the children. In addition to the regular kinship terms which relate to a nuclear family: wife, widow, mother, mother-in-law, son, daughter, sister, brother, there is a fairly elaborate hierarchy of age groups.

An Elamite Family at Ḫarbu (Tell Chuera)

^{1.d}*śin-re-ma-ni* BAN

^{munus}*pi-il-ḫa-tu* DAM-su *ša* KIN

¹*ru-us-su-kar-du* DUMU-*šu* BAN

¹*KA-šu-ṭa-a-bu* DUMU-*šu* *ša* ku-kúl-li

^{munus}*ba-bi-šar-ri* [DUM]U.MUNUS-su *tal-mi-[tu]*

^{munus}*nap-še-ri-um-mi* [K]I.MIN *pír-su*

^{1.d}*śin-KAM* [D]UMU-*šu* KI.MIN

1 ANŠE 3BÁN ŠE

Sin-remanni, archer,

Pilḫatu his wife, of work(ing age),

Russukardu his son, archer,

Pišu-ṭabu his son, *kukullu* boy,

Babi-šarri his daughter, apprentice,

Napšeri-ummi ditto, weaned,

Sin-ereš his son, ditto.

1.3 homers of grain.

Jakob 2009, No. 70:8–15

According to this passage, the male head of the family is designated as an archer, with his adult wife classified as *ša šipri* “of work”. In text No. 72 from Tell Chuera, the same family is listed, and there the eldest son, Russukardu, is classified as *ušpu* “sling(er)”.⁴⁶ Younger adolescent males are described as *ša kukulli*, a word whose meaning is uncertain but which

⁴⁴ *ša-lim-pa-ie-e*, in ll. 21, 33; see Freydank 1985b and Jakob 2003, 461–5 for this term.

⁴⁵ Wiggermann 2000, 189. Note that the heads of Elamite families at Tell Chuera are not given their patronymics. We are probably not entitled to conclude from this alone that they were *šiluḥlu*.

⁴⁶ See Postgate 2008 for this term and for the reading of BAN “archer” (not ŠITIM “builder”) for the heads of family.

Table 2.1. *Age designations*

Male		Female	
BAN (=qaltu?)	bow(man)	<i>šēbat</i>	old
<i>ušpu / ša ušpi</i>	sling(er)	<i>ša KIN (=šipri)</i>	of work(ing age)
<i>ša kukulli</i>	box [?] man		
<i>talmīdu</i>	apprentice	<i>talmittu</i>	apprentice
<i>tāriu</i>	youth	<i>tārītu</i>	youth
<i>pīrsu</i>	weaned	<i>pīrsu</i>	weaned
<i>ša GABA (=zīzi)</i>	breast fed	<i>ša GABA (=zīzi)</i>	breast fed

presumably refers to some weapon or work-tool comparable to the bow.⁴⁷ Adolescent females are called “apprentice” (and in other texts we have the equivalent term *talmīdu* for boys of this age). Young children are “weaned” (*pīrsu* for both boys and girls).

This does not exhaust the terminology in use. From two very large tablets from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta listing deported families with their possessions, one short section will illustrate some further terms:

A Hurrian Family at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta

[ʔ]ṛx x diʔl-ša [DU]MU-ša ta-ri-ú
 ʔki-bi-šar-ri DUMU-ša pīr-su
 ʔa-gi-te-šu-up DUMU-ša šā GABA
 [mu]^{mus}mu-ut-tu-ri e-ma-si-na še-bat

[P]N her son, youth,
 Kibišarri her son, weaned,
 Agi-Tešup her son, at the breast,
 Mutturi, their mother-in-law, old.

MARV 4.89 Rs.v.42'–45'

This gives us another age group called *tāriu* or, for girls, *tārītu*, of uncertain meaning but slotting between the apprentices and the weaned children, and an unweaned infant classed as *ša GABA* “of the breast”, which may need to be read *ša zīzi*.⁴⁸ Taking all together we get the categories in Table 2.1.

This elaborate classification of the workers by age derives from the dual exploitative and pastoral concerns of the administration: on one hand, it was interested in the details of the labour force to establish how many hands it could call on for specific duties, and, on the other hand, it needed to know how many mouths it had to feed, that is the nutritional requirements of the families listed, because the purpose of these lists was to establish the volume of grain required to keep them alive, and/or to supply the officials with the evidence they needed to account for the amounts they disbursed. In some, perhaps all,

⁴⁷ Cf. Jakob 2009, 101, citing but not adopting two suggestions in Postgate 2008 (“quiver-holder” or “boy carrying a container of sling-stones”). In either case it could lexically belong with Babylonian *kakkullu* as initially proposed by Freydank.

⁴⁸ See Llop-Radua 2010b, 128–9.

cases, it may have been a transitional arrangement, before the families, if nominally free, were able to support themselves in due course from the output of their farming or other activities, or if *šiluhlu* became dependants of individual Assyrian houses or separate state organisations.

For understanding the social situation of the *šiluhlu*, one text in particular is significant, of which the third and final sections are quoted here:⁴⁹

i-na 150 ÉRIN.MEŠ *zi-ti* ¹*ub-ri*
 70 ÉRIN.MEŠ *a-di* 15 ÉRIN.MEŠ *te-li-te*
ša i-na ĠIR.MEŠ-*šu-nu e-ti-qu-ú-ni*
 54 ÉRIN.MEŠ LÁ.MEŠ *ša la-a ub-la-an-ni*
 26 ÉRIN.MEŠ *me-tu-tu*
 23 ÉRIN.MEŠ *še-le-na-iu-ú*
ša ¹DUMU-*ša-qi-e il-qe-ú-ni*
ŠU.NÍGIN 173 ÉRIN.MEŠ *ša* ¹*ub-ri*
 ŠU.NIGIN 999 ÉRIN.MEŠ *ši-luḥ-lu*
ša DUMU.MEŠ ⁴UTU-ŠEŠ-SUM-*na ša qe-pu-tu*
i-na URU.ŠĀ-*bi URU e-šu-ru-ú-ni*
 ITI *ḫi-bur* UD.4.KĀM *li-mu* ^{1d}*a-šur-mu-šab-ši*
 DUMU ^d*a-nu-mu-šal-lim*

Out of 150 people, the inheritance share of Ubru:
 70 people, including 15 people increase²,
 who went past on foot;
 54 people missing, whom he did not bring;
 26 people, dead;
 23 people, Šelenaeen,
 whom Mar-šaḳie took.
Total: 173 people of Ubru.
 Grand total: 999 people, dependants,
 of the sons of Šamaš-aḫa-iddina, whom the
 representatives reviewed in the Inner City.
 Month of Ḫibur, 4th day, eponymate of
 Aššur-mušabši, son of Anu-mušallim.

MARV 1.6:20–32

This document may well have been drawn up in connection with the division of Šamaš-aḫa-iddina's estate, as the two opening sections of this text give the numbers of *šiluhlu* inherited by the two presumably older brothers, Ištar-ereš (565) and Qibi-Aššur (249). It demonstrates clearly that the rights exercised by the father over about 1,000 dependants were transferred to the next generation of his family. There is no wholly satisfactory English word to convey the meaning of *šābu* (ÉRIN.MEŠ): it is used as a general term for people en masse, male and female, young and old, without implying a precise social class but with the implication that they are under the control of others. Here a comparison with MARV 1.28, which lists some of the people taken into the houses of Ištar-ereš and Qibi-Aššur, reveals that their numbers included two women and a baby,⁵⁰ so that although one might be inclined to attribute the deaths listed to a military event, this text does not of itself provide evidence that the *šiluhlu* might be conscripted into the Assyrian army.

State Labour and Military Service

Given that adult and at least some adolescent male *šiluhlu* dependants are classified by their weapons – as archers or slingers – it seems likely that they would have been enrolled to fight on occasion, but our sources do not currently allow us to say if this would have come under the heading of *ilku* service: if it did, it might have been associated with the *ilku* obligations of their owners. There is no doubt that free members of society were at times

⁴⁹ On this text, and other related texts and issues see Postgate 2008, 84–6.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 85.

required to fulfil obligations of service for the state, referred to by the word *ilku*, but the basis for this obligation and how it was administered remain extremely difficult to extrapolate from the textual sources we have at present. Since a survey of the data in 1982, fresh evidence has become available and helps to fill out the picture, without necessitating any significant changes, but some of the underlying issues remain elusive. Succinctly, in the present state of our knowledge it seems true to say that (1) *ilku* could entail service in the military forces; (2) some (perhaps all) persons carrying out *ilku* duties did so for restricted time periods; (3) some (perhaps all) *ilku* obligations were associated with the tenure of land. In other words, we can “rule some things in”, but there are numerous possibilities we cannot rule out.

The first of these three propositions is the easiest to illustrate. Suggestive are the occasions when scribes list arrow(head)s intended for military service (*ša ilki*). These are no doubt of copper, and in MARV 5.47 we learn that the steward has taken delivery of “513 arrowheads, 1½ shekels each, for *ilku*” which three men “and the smiths have brought to the palace for their *ilku*”.⁵¹ From this we cannot tell if the “*ilku* arrows” were to be used by the persons delivering them, or, perhaps more likely, were a substitute payment from the coppersmiths for their personal service, but it does at least seem clear that some *ilku* service involved military activity. Comparable to this must be the cases where *ilku* is mentioned in association with horses, whose role was to draw battle chariots, and with other weapons or supplies appropriate to a military campaign. Three Aššur texts record the receipt of grain as “rations for (the) *ilku* horses” (ŠUKU-at ANŠE.KUR.RA(.MEŠ) *ša il-ki*),⁵² and a similar issue is recorded at Durkatlimmu: “12 homers by the old *sūtu*, rations for 2 *ilku* horses, for 4 months – they will eat at 5 *qū* each”.⁵³ At Tell al-Rimah (Karana or Qatara in the jezirah west of Nineveh), six small documents were found which all involved *ilku* obligations in different ways.⁵⁴ Grain as rations for horses is listed in TR 3023 and 2087, and these texts also list straw (IN.NU) and grease (IÀ), both probably intended for the horses, because we know from a Tell Sabi Abyad text that “pig’s fat” could be used as an ointment for horses.⁵⁵ TR 2087 also lists 53 minas of lead (AN.NA), which later in the text is specified as “[the le]ad, hire of a groom and the ho[rses]”,⁵⁶ and a sum of 30 or more minas of lead somehow associated with horses is also mentioned in TR 3006, where it has been received by a citizen (with patronymic) referred to as a *paḥnu*. That this word is likely to be the technical term for a substitute can be deduced from the other definite occurrence, in KAJ 307.⁵⁷

⁵¹ MARV 5.47:1–3 513 SAG.DU.MEŠ LIŠ-ta-*hi*.MEŠ *ša* 1½ GÍN.TA.ÂM *ša il-ki*, and 9–12 ù LÜ.SIMUG.MEŠ *ša il-k[i]-šu-nu a-na Ê.GAL-lim it-tab-lu-ni*; MARV 1.72: 2,000 arrows issued by the steward on the king’s instructions. (I remain uncertain whether the Assyrian form of *šiltāhu* is *lišāhu* or LIŠ should here be read *šil4*).

⁵² KAJ 233; 253; MARV 1.44. All three documents were sealed and KAJ 253 had an envelope (KAV 207).

⁵³ Röllig 2008 No. 69:26–7: ŠUKU 2 ANŠE.KUR.RA *ša il-ki ša* 4 ITI UD.MEŠ 5 ŠILA.TA.ÂM *e-ku-lu*: 0.05 (*qū*) x 2 (horses) 30 (days per month) x 4 (months) = 12 (homers).

⁵⁴ These are: TR 2021(+2051); 2087; 3005; 3006; 3010; 3023, see pp. 267–8; and Postgate 2002, 302–3 for more detail.

⁵⁵ T93–10, quoted in Postgate 2002, 306¹⁸, courtesy Frans Wiggermann.

⁵⁶ [AN.N]A *ig⁴-ru ša* LÜ.GIGIR ù AN[ŠE.KUR.RA(.MEŠ)], see Postgate 2002, 302.

⁵⁷ *pa-aḥ!-nu* is perhaps to be read in Billa No. 41:4 (Finkelstein 1953).

KAJ 307: Military Service Agreement⁵⁸

KIŠIB ¹ DI.KUD- ^d 7.BI	Seal of Dayyan-Sebetti.
(space for seal impression)	
<i>iš-tu</i> ITI <i>al-la-na-te</i>	From the 1st of Allānate
UD.1.KĀM <i>li-me</i>	eponymate of
^{1,d} <i>šal-ma-an-UR.SAG</i>	<u>Shalmaneser</u> :
⁵ ¹ KAM-DINGIR <i>pa-aḫ-nu</i>	Eriš-ili, the substitute ³ ,
NĪG.KA ₉ .MEŠ <i>iš-tu ma-da-te-šu</i>	has settled his accounts
<i>iṣ-ša-bat</i>	with his payment. ⁵⁹
ANŠE.KUR.RA <i>i-na pi-ti</i>	The horse will eat in the administrative
¹ KAM-DINGIR- <i>ma e-kal</i>	sphere of Eriš-ili himself.
¹⁰ <i>ul-ma u ḥa-ši-na</i>	A lance and an axe
<i>a-na pa-aḫ-ni-šu-nu</i>	they did not give
<i>la i-di-nu</i>	to their substitute ³ .
<i>iš-tu</i> UD- <i>me an-ni-e-ma</i>	From this same day
<i>mul-te-ši-tu-šu-nu ša</i> GIŠ.GIGIR	they themselves shall pay their outgoings
¹⁵ <i>ki pa-ni-ti šu-nu-ma i-da-nu</i>	on the chariot as previously
KIŠIB ^d IM- <i>ú-ma-^fi¹</i>	Seal of Adad-uma”i
KIŠIB DUB.[S]AR	Seal of the scribe
IGI ^d taš-me-tum-KUR- <i>ni</i> DUB.SAR	Before Tašmetum-šaduni, the scribe,
DUMU <i>sin-SUM-šu-me</i>	son of Sin-nadin-šumi.
²⁰ KIŠIB ¹ ta-ri-ba-te	Seal of Taribatu.

This agreement, from the eponymate (and so probably the beginning of the reign) of Shalmaneser is evidently between Eriš-ili and other persons including Dayyan-Sebetti, who seals the top of the obverse; although the document is sealed and witnessed, it is relatively informal since patronymics are dispensed with (except for the scribe). Evidently Eriš-ili has been in a contractual relationship with Dayyan-Sebetti and company,⁶⁰ and both sides are here agreeing to the ongoing terms: there seems to be a single horse, which Eriš-ili will be responsible for feeding, and he is also expected to supply his own weapons, but as before “they” will continue to meet the outgoings on the chariot. Despite the uncertainties (e.g. how will he operate a chariot with a single horse? does he not have his own *ilku* obligations to fulfil?), it seems clear that Eriš-ili is contracting to serve as a substitute on a recurrent basis. A similar settling of accounts is attested at Rimah by TR 3010 “From the 11th of Ḫibur, eponymate of Adad-bel-gabbe (year 27), Abu-ṭab and Sikku have settled their accounts. Their *ilku* service is performed ‘in the hand of’ Sikku.”⁶¹ That this was a long-term relationship going back two

⁵⁸ Previous edition Postgate 1982, 305–6 with the benefit of collations from Dr. Freydank. For the PN in l. 16 see Freydank 2003a, 255.

⁵⁹ Since Eriš-ili is not likely to be making payments to Dayyan-Sebetti and his associates, this “payment” (*maddattu*) is perhaps a package of contributions made by them to maintain him while performing service (e.g. fodder, grease, perhaps wool etc.).

⁶⁰ Possibly Dayyan-Sebetti’s partners (brothers?) are Adad-uma”i and Taribatu, who both sealed the tablet but are not said to be witnesses.

⁶¹ TR 3010:1–8 *iš-tu* ITI.ḫi-bur UD.11.KĀM li-[*me*] ^{1,d}IM-EN-*gab-be* ¹a-bu-[D]ÜG.GA *iš-tu* ¹si-ki NĪG.KA₉.MEŠ-*šu-nu* ṣa-ab-tu il-la-ak-šu-nu i-na ŠU ¹si-ki a-li-ik. For the concept of *ilku* service being “in the charge of” (*ina qāt*) someone,

decades is shown by TR 3023, dated to Aššur-nadin-šume (year 7),⁶² where Sikku receives the horse fodder, straw and grease for Abu-ṭab's *ilku*.

The specifically military nature of the *ilku* service referred to in these texts is indicated not merely by the horses, which imply chariots, but also by the weapons: in KAJ 307 the serving soldier apparently has to supply his own lance (*ulmu*) and axe (*hašinnu*). A lance was borrowed at Rimah by Šilli-Marduk in TR 2021+2051 (year 42, reign of Tukulti-Ninurta) and was to be handed back “at the return of” (or “from”) “the army” (*ina tuār hurādi*). This tablet does not mention *ilku*, but TR 3005 reads: “1.2⁷ homers of grain, 3 *qû* reedbed-pig's grease, 3 minas wool, of the army of Niḫriya, who performed *ilku*-service with his brothers.”⁶³ Although sealed, this is a fairly informal administrative note, since it does not mention any personal names, but for us it is useful in adding wool to the list of items which might accompany someone doing military service, and in confirming that someone returning from the army might have been carrying out his (or someone else's) *ilku* service. Soldiers going, or rather not going, to serve in the army are also mentioned in a pair of closely similar Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta documents which make it clear that by the time of Tukulti-Ninurta, if not earlier, arrangements were in place for some citizens to supply men for the army from among their own slaves. This emerges from MARV 4.5, which although damaged can largely be reconstructed with the help of the very similar document MARV 4.6.

KIŠIB ¹*ur-di* DUMU *i-du-ú*

(seal impression here and over all surfaces)⁶⁴

¹*šil-lí-[x x x x x]* ÌR

¹*ša* ¹*ur-di* DUMU¹ *i-du-ú*

ša a-na la-a a-la-ki

⁵ *ša* [*hu*]-*ra-di* ¹*mu*-SIG₅-[⁴NUSKA]

¹DUMU Ì¹.GÁL-DINGIR *iš-ba-ta-¹šu¹-ni*

i-na ^{uu}*ki-li-zi*

a-na pa-ni LUGAL

[^ú]-*qar-r[u]-bu-ú-ni*

¹⁰ [*x x*] *x x* ^d*a- x x* [*x x*]

(about three lines lost)

[*x x*] *x pa še pa²* ÌR²

¹⁵ [*ša tu*] *p-pu-šu ša-bi-it-t[a]*

[*i+na²*] É.GAL-*lim ú-kal-lu-ni*

[*x x x*] *x a-na* ¹*ur-di*

[E]N²-š[*u²*] *a-na bal-lu-ti*

[*pa*]-*qi-id i+na a-lak* LUGAL

²⁰ *ú-ba-la*

Seal of Urdu, son of Idu.

Šilli-[...], the slave

of Urdu, son of Idu,

whom Mudammeq-[Nusku],⁶⁵ son

of Ibašši-ilu, arrested for not serving⁶⁶

in the army,

(and) will present before the king

in Kilizu.

(passage lost)

[...]

whose² formally executed tablet they²

are keeping [in²] the palace

[...] is entrusted to Urdu, his master²,

to be maintained (lit. kept alive).

On the arrival of the king

he shall bring (him

compare KAJ 246, which states that “PN₁ has received 4 months 20 days in the charge of (*ša* ŠU) PN₂” (the connection with military service being assured by *ša hu-ra-di* in l. 6).

⁶² That is, year 7 in Röhlig's sequence, see Appendix 2.

⁶³ 1 ANŠE 2²-BÁN <<ŠE>> ŠE-um ² 3 ŠILA IÀ ŠAḪ.GIŠ.GI ³ 3 MA.NA SÍG.MEŠ ⁴ *ša hu-ra-di* ⁵ *ša* ^{uu}*ni-iḫ-ri-a* ⁶ *ša il-ka* ⁷ *iš-tu* ŠEŠ.MEŠ-*šu* ⁸ *i-li-ku-ni*.

⁶⁴ Seal impression: Fischer 1999, 146 Nr. 27.

⁶⁵ Restored after MARV 4.6:8.

⁶⁶ Note the equivalent phrase in MARV 4.6:7 *a-na la-la-ki ša hu-ra-di*.

ú-[ša²-]za-az ù tup-p[u-šu]

i-hap-pi

šúm-ma i+na tu-ar ħu-r[a-]di

LÚ¹ la-a it-tab-la

²⁵ 3 ÉRIN.MEŠ-šu a-na É.GAL-lim

i-laq-qe-ú

ITI ħi-bur [UD.x+]3.[KÁM li-mu]

¹ur-d[u]

and) make him be present,

and may break his tablet.

If on the return of the army

he has not brought the man,

they shall take three of his people

for the palace.

Month of Ĥibur, [day x+]3 [eponymate]

of Urd[u ...]

MARV 4.5

Evidently in both these texts Assyrian citizens (Urdu, son of Idu in No. 5, and two sons of Šamaš-mušabši of the city of Ĥiššutu in No. 6) are expected to have sent a slave to the army, but he has for some reason not materialised. He has, however, been arrested by Mudammeq-Nusku, who must be acting on behalf of the military authorities, and the owners are now bound over to keep the slave until he can be brought before the king when he arrives at Kilizu, perhaps on his return from campaign. What fate awaits the slave who has presumably shirked a dangerous expedition, we are not told; but if the owners fail to deliver him, it sounds as though they will have to provide the palace with three other persons, perhaps in perpetuity.

We cannot be certain that the use of the verb *alāku* “to serve”, for the obligation which the slaves and their owners faced, of itself means that it technically was indeed *ilku* service, but in this instance it seems likely, especially since in MARV 4.6 the obligation apparently rests on two brothers and is presumably therefore inherited. In other instances it may well be that going to the army is the consequence of other arrangements. A case in point may be MARV 4.119, a tablet relating to serving soldiers and sealed by the provincial governor of the land of Katmuḫu on the northern frontier, in which he is apparently signifying his acceptance of an edict. The text begins:

[KI]ŠIB ^{1,4}b[e]-er-iš-ma-ni

(seal impression)

^{1,4}be-er- iš-ma-ni

DUMU ^dbe-er-EN-li-i-t[e]

EN pa-ħi-te ša KUR kat-mu-ħi

⁵ LUGAL ur-ták-ki-is-s[u]

ma-a ÉRIN.MEŠ BAN a-li-ku-t[u]

ša ħu-ra-di ša i-na ħal-zi

^{ur}kur-da ħal-zi ^{ur}ad-da-riq

ħal-zi ^{ur}GEŠTIN.NA ħal-zi ^{ur}ap-ki

¹⁰ ħal-zi ^{ur}ši-mu i-na KUR ka x n[i] ni

ħal-zi ^{ur}ħa-šu-a-ni

ħal-zi ^{ur}ši-ma-ni-[ba]

ša URU.DIDLI-šu-nu a-[na (...)]

qe-pu-te[(-šu-nu ?)]

¹⁵ [i]š-pu-ru-[ú-ni]

(broken passage)

Seal of Ber-išmanni.

Ber-išmanni,

son of Ber-bel-li'ite,

governor of the land of Katmuḫu –

the king has bound him over,

saying: The bow troops who are

serving in the army who are in the province

of Kurda, the province of Addariq,

the province of Karana, the province of Apku,

the province of Šimu, the land of ...,

the province of Ĥašuani,

the province of Šimani[ba],

whose villages sent them to [...]

of [their] representatives ...

MARV 4.119:1–15

The point at issue is apparently that soldiers in the provinces named should not make their way into the province of Katmuḫu: “If one single server in the army, from his province or their³ village, or while on leave, should enter the land of Katmuḫu, the king has sworn on the life of Aššur his god, they shall leave Ber-išmanni [...]”.⁶⁷

While it seems certain that people who “serve in the army” are incorporated in the military, we cannot be certain that they are necessarily performing *ilku* service. The phrase could possibly apply to persons serving in another capacity. For instance, if it was normal for an *ilku* soldier to go on campaign with a lance and an axe, then perhaps the “bow troops who are serving in the army” are in a different category. As we have seen, the adult males among the deported families are described as “bowmen” (BAN), with more junior members classed as “slingers” (*ša ušpi*), and it is obviously possible that they would be incorporated in the army at times, even though they can hardly have themselves incurred *ilku* obligations through land tenure. This might explain why some persons are expected to supply the administration with large numbers of arrowheads (see earlier section in this chapter on MARV 5.47), perhaps as a substitute payment for serving themselves in person.

This is no more than speculation, and unfortunately the terminology of military ranks and conscription is complex and remains rather opaque.⁶⁸ We already have persons performing *ilku*, sometimes involving military service in view of their equipment. We have the word *hurādu*, which certainly refers to military enterprises, sometimes specifying the geographical goal of a campaign, but which can also refer to an individual soldier.⁶⁹ Further, though, we have a class of persons called *šāb šarri* (ÉRIN.MEŠ LUGAL). They are mentioned as recipients of government-issue military uniforms,⁷⁰ and in Neo-Assyrian times they appear to be those persons conscripted for *ilku* who enter the army, as opposed to those assigned to civilian duties. There is a list of 150 “king’s troops” on MARV 2.1, who have linguistically Assyrian names and patronymics, and are sometimes accompanied by sons or brothers, which would all fit well with our understanding of the traditional *ilku* system. However, in the documentation from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta “king’s troops” are found feeding women (MARV 4.31) or building boats (MARV 4.34) – but this use of military contingents may of course be a consequence of the exceptional circumstances attending the creation of the new capital.

These grain allocation texts from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta offer a wealth of detail which is plainly relevant to the state organisation of military and civilian personnel, but difficult for us to disentangle. Much of the uncertainty revolves round the term *pirru*, and the cognate adjective *perru* (or *parru*?), which at present seem to mean approximately “enrolment procedure” and “enrolled”.

108 <i>ša pi-ti</i> LUGAL	108 under the authority of the king,
154 <i>tal-pi-tu</i>	154 written off
<i>ša it-ta-lu-ku-ni</i>	who will be going away,

⁶⁷ II. 25–32: *šum-ma 1 LÚ a-li-ku ša hu-[ra]-di i-na pa-ḫi-ti-šu lu URU-¹šu²-nu³ à lu-ú ki-i ra-qa-e a-na KUR kat-mu-ḫi e-ru-ub LUGAL nap-ša-te ša a-šur DINGIR-šu it-ta-ma* [¹a]b]e-er-iš-ma-ni [(x) x]x-UB-di uš-šu-ru.

⁶⁸ For the issues in the next two paragraphs see more detailed discussion in Postgate 2008.

⁶⁹ Jakob 2003, 202–8.

⁷⁰ Postgate 1979a.

1432 <i>re-ēḫ-tu</i>	1,432 the remainder,
<i>ša a-na šī-īp-ri</i>	who will be selected for labour.
<i>i-ba-tu-qu-ú-ni</i>	
ŠU.NIGIN 1694	Total: 1,694
<i>pī-ir-ru</i>	enrolment
<i>ša ŠU 'ub-ri</i>	in the charge of Ubru.

MARV 1.18

The ÉRIN.MEŠ *perrūtu* must be personnel enrolled through this procedure, and presumably the “enrolment officers” (EN.MEŠ *pirri*), of whom there were large numbers (as many as 325 in MARV 2.17:59), were their immediate overseers. What remains obscure at present is whether this whole system of enrolment relates directly to the lists of personnel kept on a number of writing-boards maintained by the central government over a period of some twenty years or longer during the reigns of Shalmaneser and Tukulti-Ninurta. One of these boards (*lē'u*) was the king's, and there seem to have been four others each named after an individual: Lullayu, Sin-ašared, Šamaš-aḫa-iddina⁷¹ and Adad-šamši. In MARV 1.1 they may have been referred to as “heralds of the boards” (*na-gi-ri ša le-a-ni*), but this is uncertain for grammatical reasons. In MARV 2.17 we learn that when work was carried out at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta approximately 1,700 troops listed on Adad-šamši's board were employed.⁷² Of these 404 were “army-troops” ÉRIN.MEŠ *hurādāte*), and 560 were “enrolled” (*perrūtu*), but others come from a range of professions, including 37 exorcists, 17 diviners, 40 scribes of the governor, 22 scribes of the steward, doorkeepers, bird-catchers, transport officials, ... 47 deportees, 28 Šelenayans and 8 Šubrian interpreters. It is evident that not all of these can be performing *ilku* service, and it is hard to suppose that they were all conscripted via an “enrolment” procedure (*pirru*), though some presumably were. Nor do they seem likely all to be “king's troops”, and in KAJ 245 the “King's Board” included women, so we are left at present unsure of the mechanism which recruited this varied body of personnel to state service.⁷³

Crafts and Professions

The Middle Assyrian documents bear witness to a wide range of specialised employments. In many cases, such as industrial or agricultural specialists, merchants or scribes, their activities are evident to us and uncontroversial, but there are also a number of professions which have more to do with social organisation and whose function is less obvious. In most cases, the simple professional designation – “shepherd”, “coppersmith”, “doorkeeper” – is insufficient to tell us how the holder of the title is positioned in the social hierarchy or administrative network, and frustratingly the scribes do not specify people's professions as often as we would like: in legal documents, the witnesses' professions are given only exceptionally in addition

⁷¹ This Šamaš-aḫa-iddina may well have been the father of Ubru and his brothers (see MARV 1.6), but his role as a “board owner” is probably unrelated to his personal “holdings” of *šiluhlu*.

⁷² And 2262 on the “King's Board” (see Freydank 1985b, 362).

⁷³ For further details see provisionally Postgate 2008, 84.

to their fathers' names,⁷⁴ and the internal documents of an administrative organisation frequently dispense with both patronymics and professions because the people involved are well known and need no further identification.

When considering the role of different specialised workers within Assyrian society, one of the most difficult issues to resolve is the relationship between them and their employers. Wherever we see a craft worker – or indeed a merchant (*tamkāru*) – serving the palace, the question invariably arises whether he (or she) was exclusively employed by the state or could also pursue his (or her) own independent activities, and the same uncertainty applies to large private households.⁷⁵ It would be otiose to spell out a list of the different crafts and professions, since these have been comprehensively gathered and fully discussed in Jakob (2003). However, for our current purposes two terms merit a brief discussion before engaging with individual archives, as they have a significant role to play in the state organisation. These are the commissioner or representative (*qēpu*), and the eunuch (*ša rēšē(n)*).⁷⁶

The *qēpu* is etymologically a person entrusted with a responsibility, and this effectively meant that he represented the authority who appointed him. In some cases this is the king himself, and we occasionally find men explicitly described as “representatives of the king”, as for instance during a land sale transaction (see §8 of Tablet B of the Laws, and Jakob 2003, 262 for other occasions) although more often they are just given the title *qēpu*. This is plainly not so much a rank or position, but a formally recognised function. In the case of a provincial administrator at Durkatlimmu it is obviously a long-term appointment,⁷⁷ but in other cases it is plainly an ad hoc arrangement for a particular occasion.⁷⁸ Being a *qēpu* did not exclude having a more specific professional designation. Sometimes *qēpūte* can refer to a group of miscellaneous officials (cf. p. 8), while in some cases it was probably a person's specialist skills which made him an appropriate representative. This is visible in the letters of Babu-ahā-iddina, where we meet groups of his “representatives”: they usually are not given any other title and we remain in the dark as to their special skills, but occasionally someone whose profession we know is mentioned among the “representatives”, and we can see why.⁷⁹ We several times meet “the representatives for Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta” (e.g. MARV 4.106; MARV 4.18:3; 4.57:21; 9.62:6; 9.36:1), or more specifically “of the granary of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta” (MARV 4.48:4; 4.60:12). Occasionally a scribe is also designated as a “representative” (MARV 4.31:24; 6.86:17 “of Arbail”; 8.21:14), and more than once a son of the king is named as a *qēpu* (MARV 4.34:23; at Durkatlimmu, see Jakob 2003, 269⁵⁶), as are certain well-known, high-ranking

⁷⁴ One such exception is the land sale document BM 123367 (see Figure 3.4, p. 67), where the first witness is a mayor (*hāziānu*) and the second a provincial governor (*bēl pāḫiti*). The remaining witnesses (except as usual the scribe) were not given their professions, and it is likely that these two were specified in this way because their presence as witnesses to an important real estate sale was ex officio, by virtue of the office they filled.

⁷⁵ See for example the work-assignment (*iškāru*) system, p. 221.

⁷⁶ For the scribe, see the next section, and for the “steward” pp. 149–51.

⁷⁷ See pp. 312–3; Jakob 2003, 269ff.

⁷⁸ As for example at Tell al-Rimah in TR 2014 and 3018 (pp. 265–6).

⁷⁹ Specifically, Adad-tura the tailor (*kāšīru*) and Siqi-ilani the merchant (see pp. 214–5).

officials from Tukulti-Ninurta's court, several of whom may at the same time be defined as a "eunuch of the king" (*ša SAG LUGAL qe-pu*).⁸⁰

The Akkadian reading of LÚ.SAG in Neo-Assyrian texts is unquestionably *ša rēši* (as demonstrated by its appearance as a loanword in Aramaic and other languages). Middle Assyrian normally writes *ša/šá SAG*, and its formal equivalent must use the dual form, which is written syllabically *ša re-še-en* in the Laws. In both Middle and Neo-Assyrian times, the meaning eunuch is beyond doubt in some contexts, and I have seen no convincing argument not to extend this meaning to all Assyrian texts, whatever the situation in Babylonia.⁸¹ As in Neo-Assyrian times, it is noticeable that certain Middle Assyrian persons bearing this title use seals which show a beardless adult male (for Ušur-namkur-šarri see Fischer 1999, 122).⁸² In Middle Assyrian texts *ša rēši* (or *ša rēšēn*) are almost always "of the king",⁸³ and as just mentioned, under Tukulti-Ninurta some of the king's eunuchs were on occasion appointed as his representatives (*qēpu*). Ušur-namkur-šarri also held a variety of high offices under Tukulti-Ninurta, and his contemporaries Libur-zanin-Aššur, who dedicated an agate "eye stone" inscribed with his name⁸⁴; Dayyan-bel-ekur and Dayyan-Aššur⁸⁵ were other eunuchs holding high office. Eunuchs are mentioned in the context of palace decrees, where they have dealings with some of the palace women, but guarding the harem was certainly not their only function; Jakob is able to delineate a range of managerial activities undertaken by individuals known to be eunuchs (2003, 66–92).

Land

The most fundamental structure of the Assyrian state consists of the relationship between people and land. The state's essence is to be "the land of Aššur", and the Assyrian coronation

⁸⁰ At least four texts from the Stewards' Archive newly published in MARV 10 conclude with the bare statement "PN (+profession) *qēpu*", evidently recording that this person acted on behalf of the steward in this particular transaction (cf. Postgate 2013a; p. 270).

⁸¹ In this book sceptics may substitute a meaning of their own whenever they see the word eunuch. This is not the place to revisit the arguments in detail especially since the relevant material is fully discussed in Jakob 2003, 84–8, arriving at the correct conclusion (though note that the difficulty he perceives in the phrase *lu-ú ša SAG LUGAL lu-ú ma-zi-iz pa-ni ša la-a mar-ru-ru-ni* is imaginary since the translation should run simply "either a eunuch of the king, or a courtier who is not castrated" – since we know from decree no. 21–2 (cited by him on p. 87) that *mazziz pānī* is a general term for *courtier* which can embrace "eunuchs, or [other] courtiers, or votaries").

⁸² In view of the revised drawing of his seal (Figure 4.12, p. 196) this may not apply to Mutta. See already Postgate 1973b, 10 for persons known to be termed *ša SAG* using seals which show an unbearded adult male.

⁸³ Jakob's invaluable assemblage of references (2003, 82–3) can list only two passages where a *ša rēšē* is not "of the king". Of these, MARV 2.4:7' is broken and very uncertain (the]SAG' is not self-evidently SAG and is followed by the signs *mu-SIG₅* which look like the second part of a personal name). In Donbaz 1976, A.3199 reads *ša¹ mu-ut-ta ša SAG ša pi-ti^{1,d} UTU-ri-ba* (rather than *-ri-ma<-ni>!*), but it is not clear whether the phrase *ša pitti* PN "in the administrative sphere of PN" refers to Mutta's personal status or to some other aspect of the transaction. Mutta served the palace, and so for the present we cannot certainly identify a single non-royal eunuch although this does not of itself seem an impossibility. Text 105 in the Mutta archive mentions Samu¹⁰ *šá SAG* (Weidner's reading confirmed by Donbaz 1976, Pl. 8), but even if we should not restore [LUGAL] at the end of the line, in this archive the likelihood is that the man is in royal service.

⁸⁴ Grayson 1987, 299.

⁸⁵ *ša SAG LUGAL qe-e-pi* MARV 1.27:23.

ritual charges the monarch with a duty to “extend your land” (*rappiṣ mātkā*). Part of the same ritual involves the (re)installation of high officials, including “any office holder” (*attamānu bēl pāḥiti*), with the king telling them to resume their office.⁸⁶ The title *bēl pāḥiti* (the Assyrian dialect equivalent of the Babylonian *bēl pīḥati*) literally means no more than someone with a responsibility, but in Assyria during the 13th century it comes to refer specifically to the governor of a territorial province.⁸⁷ In this context it partly or entirely replaces the earlier title *ḥassihlu*, best attested in the texts from Šibaniba (Tell Billa).⁸⁸ This has a hybrid origin, with the Hurrian professional ending *-(u)hlu* attached to the Akkadian word *ḥalzu*, which is attested in the early second millennium in northern Mesopotamia and Mari as meaning a province and still holds that meaning in Middle Assyrian texts.⁸⁹ The term *bēl pāḥiti* becomes so closely identified with the provincial governor that very soon (at latest by the reign of Shalmaneser) *pāḥutu* on its own came to mean “province” as is evidenced by the two provinces established on the lower Ḥabur, “Upper Province” and “Lower Province”.⁹⁰ As we shall see, the regime of contributions to the Aššur Temple was organised province by province, and they may be summed up as “offerings received of the provinces” (*gi-na-ú maḥ-ru ša pa-ḥa-a-te*.MEŠ MARV 7.22). From correspondence and administrative documents in various archives it is clear that the provincial governor, based at a provincial capital which usually gave its name to the territory he controlled, was the agent through which the central government administered its territory.

In this role the governor represented the king and administered the rights of the monarch over the land within his province. What precisely those rights were, is a much more complex question. In the writer’s view, the crown notionally exercised a sovereign right over all land within the boundaries of the “land of Aššur”, and this was the premise on which the *ilku*, or state service, system was organised. In practice, though, the state, and its legal system headed by the monarch, would have recognised traditional rights to ownership of land, both in the Assyrian heartland round Aššur and in more remote and recently annexed provinces, even if in particular circumstances it also implemented annexations or confiscations of land into the state’s possession. The theoretical issues behind the land-owning situation are too complex

⁸⁶ Müller 1937, 12–14.

⁸⁷ The title features already in the edict of Aššur-uballiṭ (Weidner 1954–6, 268 *Satzung* 1:7). Here it seems likely to mean generally “office holder” rather than “provincial governor” (as rendered in Roth 1995, 197), but the context is too broken for certainty.

⁸⁸ Discussed by Machinist 1982, 22–4 and Llop 2011; since there is no evidence that *ḥalzu* in Middle Assyrian can mean a “fort” (see following note), there is no call for understanding this title to refer to a garrison commander. For the terminology, and a survey of attested provinces, see now Llop 2012.

⁸⁹ There is no evidence in Middle Assyrian sources for a meaning “fortress” which has been imported from the graph ḤAL.ŠU used in Neo-Assyrian texts to render the word *birtu*. The only apparent Middle Assyrian instance of a meaning “fort” relies on an emendation of a royal inscription which is not obviously correct. I have seen no reason to think that the word meant “fortress” or similar at Nuzi either, and there too some if not most scholars accept a meaning like “district”.

⁹⁰ Though in normal parlance, at least, *ḥalzu* also remained in use as a term for province, cf. MARV 4.119:7–12 from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, listing the *ḥal-zi* of Kurda, Addariq, Karana, Apku, Šimu, Ḥašuanu and Šimaniba. The term *pāḥutu* survived into the first millennium and was in due course borrowed into West Semitic languages.

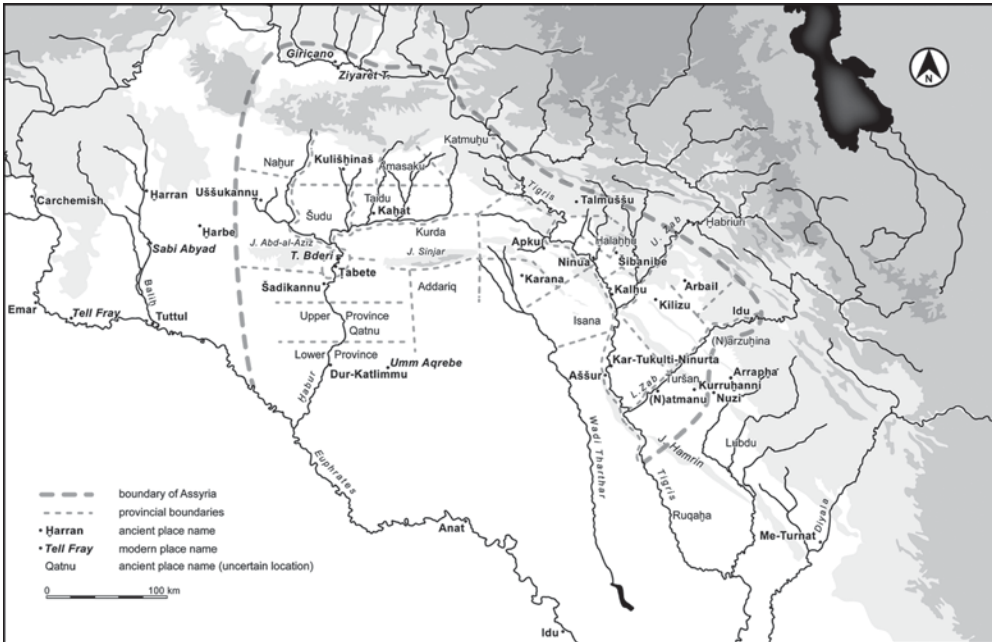


Figure 2.1. Assyria in the 12th century BC showing hypothetical provincial boundaries.

and keenly disputed to address here, and therefore we move on to consider the evidence for various classes of land regime under the Middle Assyrian kings.

Private Land Tenure

While the archives with which we are principally concerned understandably tell us more about state-administered land, this should not blind us to the probability that most agriculture was undertaken by the private sector. At present, the only substantial evidence for private land tenure comes from Aššur. Agricultural conditions around the capital must have differed significantly from the upper Ḫabur and other northern provinces of Assyria. In the first place, Aššur itself is far enough south for rainfall agriculture to be a precarious subsistence strategy.⁹¹ Economically, as the city itself grew it may have outstripped the carrying capacity of the fields in its traditional hinterland: this must have consisted of narrow strips of fertile alluvium along the valley bed of the Tigris, which could be irrigated by simple gravity flow, supplemented by whatever crops could be won in good years from dry-farming enterprises or hand-watered plots in the surrounding countryside.⁹² Undoubtedly in the traditional Assyrian heartland, but also perhaps in more recently annexed territories, there

⁹¹ For the agricultural topography of this part of Iraq, see in detail Oates 1968, 14–15.

⁹² For the terrain around Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta see Freydank 2009a, 59 with footnote 101 citing Eickhoff. Tablet B of the Middle Assyrian laws regulates the collective exploitation of water from wells (§17) and rainfall (§18).

was a long-standing regime of private landownership which we would not expect to generate documentation preserved in the archives of the state administration. There is little documentary evidence for state involvement in agriculture around Aššur (though as we shall see there are important texts from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta across the river), but the Ass. 14446 archive (Pedersén's M9), dating mainly from the 14th century, before the state's annexation of the Ḫabur triangle, gives us a glimpse of the exploitation of rural settlements west of Aššur by the urban elite, shedding light on local land tenure and its role in the economy. Many of these tablets are loans of lead from members of urban families to villagers, backed up by pledges of land.⁹³ They do not follow a rigid formula, but KAJ 14 is typical in several respects.

KAJ 14: Lead Loan with Land Pledge

KIŠIB ʾĪ.GÁL-DINGIR

1 GÜ.UN 5 MA.NA AN.NA

ṭi-ri NA₄ Ê *a-lim*

KI ʾi-din-ku-be DUMU *ri-iš*-^dAG

ʾĪ.GÁL-DINGIR DUMU 30-na-din-ŠEŠ.MEŠ

DUMU *la-bu-ni-i[a]*

ŠU.BA.AN.TI *a-na* 6 ITI-*ḫi*

SAG.DU AN.NA ʾĪ.LÁ.E *ki-i ša-pár-ti*

20 IKU A.ŠĀ-šu SIG₅-*qú e-be-er-ti*

ši-iš-ša-ar A.GĀR ^{uru}*gu-ub-bi-Ê.GAL-lim*

i-na-ás-sa-aq i-ša-bat ʾi-din-ku-be

ú-ka-al šum-ma a-na 6 ITI-*ḫi*

AN.NA *la-a i-ḫi-aṭ*

A.ŠĀ-šu *up-pu la-qí*

A.ŠĀ *ú-za-ak-ka i-na* *a-šal*

LUGAL *i-ma-da-ad*

ù tup-pa MÍ.KALAG.GA

a-na pa-ni LUGAL *i-ša-aṭ-tar*

(witnesses, seal impressions and date)

Seal of Ibašši-ilu.

(seal impression)

1 talent 5 minas of lead

stamped⁷ by the stone of the City House,⁹⁴

from Iddin-Kube, son of Riš-Nabu,

Ibašši-ilu, son of Sin-nadin-aḫḫi,

son of Labuniya,

has received. Within 6 months

he will pay the capital of the lead. As surety

20 *iku* of his prime field(s) across

the Šiššar, commonland⁹⁵ of Gubbi-ekalli,

he will select and take, Iddin-Kube will

hold (it). If within 6 months

he does not pay the lead,

his field is publicly acquired.

He will clear the field of claims, and

will measure it with the royal rope,

and he will write a “valid tablet”

before the king.

Land pledge texts like this one show plots of agricultural land in villages, in danger of passing from their previous owners into the hands of certain Aššur-based families. The villages are described as “across the Šiššar”, a water course plausibly identified with the modern Wadi

⁹³ Transliterations and translations of the archive in Saporette 1979b; 1982.

⁹⁴ For *ṭiri aban bēt ālim* see Veenhof 1989, 523. Despite his comment about KAJ 47, this phrase is otherwise confined to statements of metal weight or quality; the phrase there must surely be intended to apply to the metal, not the grain, for which other qualifications might be expected, and in any case grain would not be weighed. The MA contexts must imply that the “stone of the City House” is used in some way to approve or authenticate the metal used either in terms of its quality or its actual weight. My translation is a complete guess, but is broadly in line with Veenhof’s proposal to see *ṭiri* as referring “to the fact that the weight had been established by using the official weight standard of the city”. An association with a verb *ṭerû* (*ṭarā’u*?) does not seem implausible, although it is not attested in Assyrian dialect.

⁹⁵ The translation “commonland” for *uḡāru* is intended to emphasise the communal administration of, but not to imply common ownership of, the agricultural territory of a settlement.

Tharthar, some 30 to 40 kilometres west of the Tigris.⁹⁶ One is named after an individual, Ili-itt(i)-ilu; the others are “Cistern of the Palace” (Gubbi-ekalli) and “Well of the water channels” (Bur-raṭati) – all hinting at relatively recent exploitation requiring some form of irrigation, supported by two of the documents relating to Bur-raṭati which mention *shadufs*.⁹⁷ Nissen compared the style of the seals used by different groups on these tablets. Since they were the purchasers, we would not expect the members of urban families to have sealed the tablets, and Nissen demonstrated that the occasional more sophisticated and recognisably Assyrian seals would have belonged to the scribes, who must also have been based at Aššur, whereas the much more frequent and simpler Mittanian-style seals were used by the villagers whose lands were used as security or who acted as witnesses.⁹⁸ As the closing lines of KAJ 14 illustrate, the documents we have are not definitive title deeds (called in Middle Assyrian *tuppu dannutu*), but provisional documents authorising the intending purchaser to possess and exploit his land.

Thus an area of 20 *iku* (~7.2 ha) is to be selected (by the current owner) in KAJ 14, and placed at the disposal of the creditor for the 6-month duration of the loan, but thereafter if repayment is not made the land will be sold. This would involve further legal proceedings to free the land of other claims, and must reflect the fact that in the traditional rural community plots of land were administered in such a way that a family did not have an absolute entitlement to specific pieces of ground, but was assigned the right to cultivate a given area within a larger unit, the precise piece of land being determined by the drawing of lots (*pūru*). Evidence for this practice, which was partly in place to organise and standardise the alternate year fallow regime, is found in occasional Middle Assyrian (and indeed Neo-Assyrian) texts, and is also detectable in the badly damaged Tablet B of the Middle Assyrian law codes.⁹⁹ This shows that land could be delimited by a “great boundary of partners” (*taḫūmu rabi’u ša tappā’i*), within which lay “lots” (*pūru*) divided by “small boundaries”.¹⁰⁰

Middle Assyrian Laws, Tablet B §8 (KAV 2.iv.11–19)

šum-ma LÛ ta-ḫu-ú-ma GAL-a	If a man has interfered with the major
ša-a tap-pa-i-šu ús-sa-am-me-eḫ	boundary of his partners
ub-ta-e-ru-uš	and they have proved it against him
uk-ta-i-nu-uš	and convicted him,
A.ŠÀ am-mar ú-sa-am-me-ḫu-ni	he shall give threefold as much
3.TA.ÀM-a-te i-id-dan	field as he interfered with,
1 ú-ba-an-šu i-na-ak-ki-sú	they shall cut off one of his fingers,
1 ME i-na GIŠ.PA.MEŠ i-maḫ-ḫu-šu-uš	they shall beat him 100 times with the rod,
1 ITI UD.MEŠ-te ši-pár LUGAL e-pa-aš	(and) he shall do 1 month of the king’s work.

⁹⁶ Nissen 1967, 115–16.

⁹⁷ KAJ 151 and 152: *za-ru-gi*. Cf. Wiggermann 2000, 178. §§10 and 17–18 of Tablet B of the Middle Assyrian Laws deal with irrigation matters, and some form of irrigation was probably essential at the latitude of Aššur.

⁹⁸ Nissen 1967, 115–16.

⁹⁹ See Postgate 1989, 144 for the continuation of the practice into the first millennium, and 1982, 309–10 for recent parallels in the Hatay.

¹⁰⁰ §§8–9, as described in Diakonoff 1969, 205 [written in 1949].

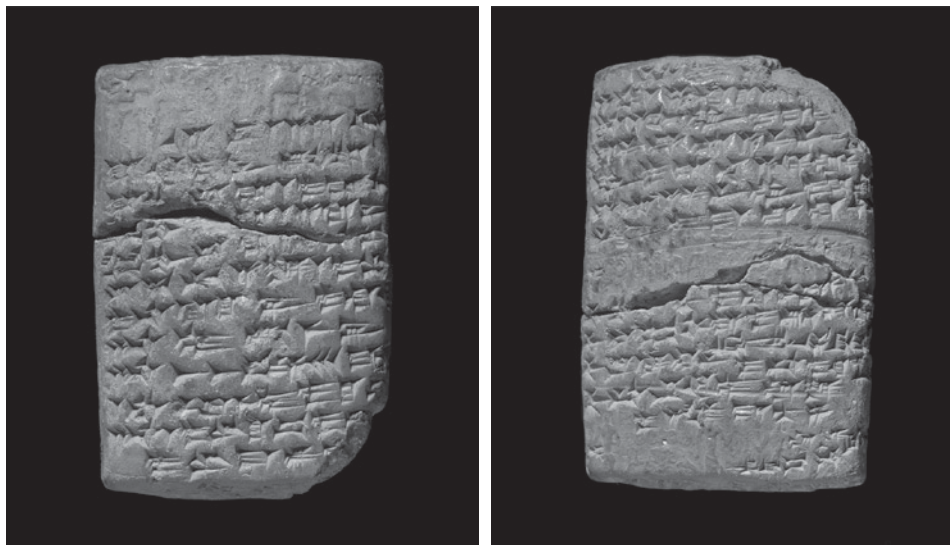


Figure 2.2a. Fourteenth-century land sale document from Aššur (BM 108924). Photo © The Trustees of the British Museum.

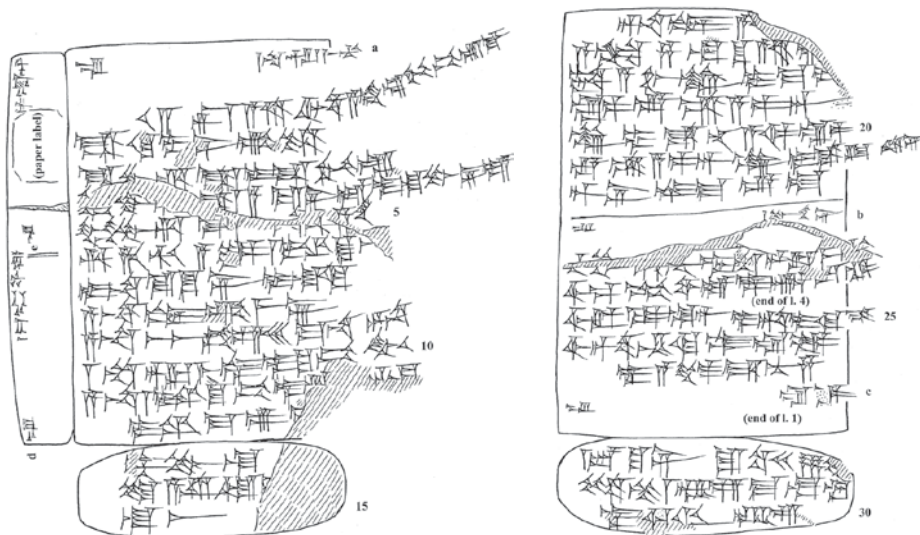


Figure 2.2b. BM 108924, to show positioning of seller's and witnesses' seals and captions (after Postgate & Collon 1999–2001, pp. 12–13). © J. N. Postgate.

a: seller's seal caption, b,d,e: witnesses' seal captions, c: scribe's seal caption.

The major boundaries were important, as indicated by the penalty for removing one. In the following section (§9) lesser penalties are exacted for removal of “the small boundary between lots” (*taḫūmu šaḫru ša pu-ra-a-ni*), a phrase showing that the small boundaries delimited plots allocated by the drawing of lots. This procedure is attested in Middle

Assyrian texts by KAJ 139, which refers to second, third and fourth lots, and by KAV 125–9 mentioning fourth, fifth, seventh and ninth lots. KAJ 139 is from the Ass. 14446 archive, and must belong in the context of a land purchase where a number of existing landowners own lots in two different fields. Two of the owners are “clear” (*za-ku-ú*); a third, Abu-ṭab, plainly is not as the fourth, Ibašši-ilu, “takes recurrent responsibility for clearing” him (*pa-ḥa-at* ¹*a-bu-DÛG.GA za-ak-ku-e* [¹Ġ.G]ÁL–DINGIR-*ma it-ta-na-aš-ši*). This illustrates vividly one of the preliminaries to a land purchase in traditional agricultural areas, that is the process of “clearing the field of claims” as required by KAJ 14, and we see that it involved the cooperation of various members of the village community. Putting the 20 *iku* at the disposal of his creditor – who was not a member of the existing village community – obliged the debtor to “select and take” a specific area of land, separating it off from the communally administered plots, and this was of course the first step towards the community’s final loss of control over its traditional lands. The requirement to measure the field and prepare a “valid tablet”, reflecting state control of the land regime, is regularly encountered in the land sale documents of the Ass. 14446 archive and is illustrated by another section of the laws.

Middle Assyrian Laws, Tablet B §6 (KAV 2.iii.2’-49’)

(beginning lost)

a-na KÛ.BABBAR [i-laq-q]qe
ú-di-ni A.ŠÀ ù]É
a-na KÛ.BABBAR la-a [i-laq-q]e-ú-ni
1 ITI UD.MEŠ-te’ LÛ¹.[NI]MGIR 3-šu
i-na lib-bi URU ^da-šur ú-sa-ás-sa
3-šu-ma i-na ŠÀ URU A.ŠÀ ù É
ša-a i-laq-qe-ú-ni ú-sa-ás-sa
ma-a A.ŠÀ ù É
ša-a an-na-na DUMU an-na-na
i-na A.GÀR URU an-ni-e
a-na [KÛ.BABBAR] a-la-aq-qe
ša-a la-qa-šu-nu
ù da-[b]a-a-ab-šu-nu
i-ba-ás-ši-ú-ni
tup-pa-te-šu-nu lu-še-li-a-nim-ma
a-na pa-ni qé-pu-ú-te liš-ku-nu
li-id-bu-bu lu-zak-ki-ú-ma
li-il-qé-ú
ša i-na ITI UD.MEŠ-te an-na-a-te
ú-di-i-ni e-da-nu
la-a ma-la’e tup-pa-te-šu-nu
it-ta-al-lu-né-en-ni
a-na pa-ni qé-pu-ú-te
il-ta-ak-nu-ú-ni
LÛ a-na si-ir A.ŠÀ-šu
i-šal-lim i-laq-qé
i-na UD-mi LÛ.NIMGIR i-na lib-bi
URU ^da-šur i-sa-si-ú-ni

[...] acquires for silver,
 before he acquires the fi[eld or] house
 for silver,
 for 1 month he shall have the herald
 proclaim thrice within the city of Aššur,
 and proclaim thrice in the village of the
 field or house which he is acquiring,
 saying “The field or house
 of so-and-so son of so-and-so
 in the commonland of this village
 I am acquiring for [silver].
 Let any for whom there is
 (a case for) acquiring or litigating
 bring up their tablets
 and place them before the representatives,
 let them litigate, clear (their claims and)
 acquire.”
 Whoever within this month,
 before the completion of the deadline
 has brought their tablets (and)
 has placed them
 before the representatives,
 (each) man in proportion to his field
 shall acquire in full.
 On the day when the herald
 proclaims within the city of Aššur,

1 *i-na* SUKKAL *ša pa-ni* LUGAL
 DUB.SAR URU LÚ.NIMGIR
 ù *qé-pu-tu* *ša* LUGAL *iz-za-zu*
ša-a URU A.ŠĀ ù Ē
i-laq-qe-ú-ni
ḥa-zi-a-nu 3 GAL.MEŠ *ša* URU *iz-za-zu*
 LÚ.NIMGIR-*ma ú-sa-su-ú*
tup-pa-te-šu-nu i-šaṭ-ṭu-ru
i-id-du-nu
ma-a i-na 1 ITI UD.MEŠ-*te an-na-te*
 3-*šu* LÚ.NIMGIR *is-si-si*
ša i-na 1 ITI UD.MEŠ-*te an-na-te*
tup-pu-šu la-a it-tab-la-an-ni
a-na pa-ni qé-pu-ú-te
la-a il-ták-nu-ú-ni
i-na A.ŠĀ ù Ē *qa-su e-li*
a-na mu-sa-as-si-a-ni
ša-a LÚ.NIMGIR *za-a-ku*
 3 *tup-pa-a-te* *ša sa-su* LÚ.NIMGIR
ša LÚ.DI.KUD.MEŠ *i-ša-ṭu-ú-ru*

one of the chancellors serving the king,
 the city scribe, the herald and
 the king's representatives shall be present.
 The person who is acquiring the village,
 the field or the house, the mayor (and)
 three elders of the village shall be present,
 shall have the herald proclaim,
 shall write their tablets (and)
 hand them over,
 saying "Within this month
 the herald has proclaimed thrice.
 Whoever within this month
 has not brought his tablet,
 (and) has not placed (it)
 before the representatives,
 shall forfeit his field or house.
 It is clear (of claims) for the person
 who had the herald proclaim."
 They shall write three tablets of the herald's
 proclamations for(?) the judges ... (remainder fragmentary)¹⁰¹

There are numerous points of interest in this law. One is the expectation that the real estate being acquired will be in a village away from Aššur itself, which entails the involvement of both officials in the capital and local authorities. There is little evidence from outside Aššur illustrating the land tenure conditions in the provinces, but the Urad-Šerua family's land holdings in Šarika, along with other documents from their archive (Chapter 4.5), provide evidence from the 13th century for the urban elite's interest in rural property, and there is evidence from Tell al-Rimah in the jezirah to the west supporting the picture of a countryside linked in various ways to the city. Also from Tell al-Rimah comes a rare land sale document from outside Aššur, which prescribes that the purchaser "shall encircle the field (to measure it), and according to the edict of the king he shall have the herald make an announcement".¹⁰² The verb *ušalba* "encircle" here replaces "measuring with the royal rope" and is a usage otherwise known to us from Nuzi rather than Aššur (CAD L 76), suggesting traditions which may have persisted from Mittanian times, but the rest of the phrase requires adherence to the procedures decreed by the king.

Another point of interest in Tablet B §6 is the whole process of "clearing" the property of other claims and the importance attached both to the presentation of written evidence for any claims and to the completion of further documentation to finalise the transfer of ownership.¹⁰³ A chest full of "tablets of the herald's proclamations" for houses in the city

¹⁰¹ The broken passage may have said where the three copies went; for some thoughts on this see Villard 1996. Note that Roth's translation (1995, 178) "Three tablets that the judges will write ..." would require the Assyrian subjunctive form *išaṭṭurūni*.

¹⁰² TR 3004:12'-14' A.ŠĀ *ú-šal-ba ki-i pi-i ri-ik-si* *ša* LUGAL LÚ.NIMGIR *ú-sa-sa* (Wiseman 1968, Pl. LVIII, collated).

¹⁰³ For more detail of the various legal procedures prescribed by this law and the land conveyance tablets, see Postgate 1971, 515.

of Aššur is listed in the inventory of Urad-Šerua's storeroom (see p. 242), and immediately after that a chest of "clearance(s) of people and fields of the town of Šarika (*tazkīte ša ÉRIN.MEŠ u A.ŠĀ.MEŠ ša* ^{uru}Šarika)", which again underlines the role of formal legal documents in the procedures required for the purchase of property whether at Aššur or in the countryside. As at Tell al-Rimah, the requirement in KAJ 14 and similar documents to measure the land "with the king's rope" and to write the final property deed "before the king" emphasises the state's direct concern to control the regime of landownership across its territory. This may in part reflect the king's role as the principal judicial authority (in which role he retained the title *uklu* "overseer" specifically in relation to land entitlement until the end of the Assyrian Empire in the 7th century), but it must also link to the system of state service (*ilku*), which was probably formally attached to any private landholding in the land of Aššur, and is occasionally mentioned in the context of land tenure.¹⁰⁴

State Farms

Even if private landownership (albeit conditional on *ilku* obligations) may have been the norm, the state did manage its own estates, as the texts from Durkatlimmu demonstrate. They clearly show that a provincial government could administer a number of farms for which the chief farmers were allocated fields amounting to multiples of 100 *iku* (ca. 36 hectares) primarily for barley cultivation, although they were also expected to produce sesame and wheat, and at Durkatlimmu at least there were separate, smaller plots established on irrigated land.¹⁰⁵ Looking at the evidence for the yields recovered, compared with the different demands on the provincial administration's stocks of grain, the scale of the operation at Durkatlimmu may seem surprisingly small, but texts from Aššur using an extremely similar formulation suggest that this may not have been exceptional. The areas and yields recorded for Nemaḍ-Ištar, in the jezirah between Nineveh and the Ḫabur, with a total of state-cultivated land of 600 *iku* (~216 ha.) were in the same order of magnitude, as were the comparable texts dealing with Turšan and Ḫiṣṣutu.¹⁰⁶ It is clear that from at least the reign of Shalmaneser the central government installed an agricultural regime administered by the provincial authorities in different regions of the state for the production of grain and other crops. Much of the harvest each year went back into seed corn and rations for the plough oxen and farm labourers, but in good years there was a surplus to fill the provincial palace's granaries. Nevertheless the amounts involved are by no means huge, and it is plain that this was not in any way a complete state takeover of the local economy.

¹⁰⁴ See pp. 21–7; Postgate 1971; 1982.

¹⁰⁵ In this context we should compare the first-millennium allocations of land to high state officials (e.g. the chief cupbearer, the Palace Herald and certain provinces) in one of the Harran census tablets (SAA 11 No. 219 = Fales 1973, No. 21; see Postgate 1989, 146–7).

¹⁰⁶ See Freydank 1994a and pp. 323–4 for all these texts.

Prebendary Allocations of Land

This is not the whole picture. From Tell Chuera there is clear evidence for two other ways the state promoted agriculture. On one hand there are small (2–3 *iku* ~0.72–1.08 ha.) plots of land assigned to individual members of the local governing cadre of Assyrian officials, numbering about 30 in all. Plots this size, as pointed out by Jakob, cannot have been sufficient to sustain an official and his family throughout the year, so this was presumably only one part of a package of remuneration. The situation must partly have depended on whether the majority of the governing cadre consisted of local residents, with a pre-existing subsistence base they could fall back on, or were rather state employees posted to a remote part of the kingdom, who would have needed more substantial state support. At Chuera they are referred to as “Assyrians”, presumably to distinguish them from the locals, and this suggests that we should see them as more of a colonial garrison, planted on a partially deserted landscape to act as a secure staging point on the route to the west, rather than a surviving pre-Assyrian population which maintained its presence.

In either case, there must have been cultivable land available to the state authorities which could be allocated to its dependants, and the Chuera archive also includes a number of texts demonstrating the establishment of farms staffed by “Elamites” with their entire families. We know of no obvious occasion on which the 13th-century Assyrian kings might have captured large numbers of ethnic Elamites. As noted by Jakob, while many of the people in these lists do have distinctly non-Assyrian and in some cases clearly Elamite names, others have good Assyrian names, and this suggests that the population in question had already spent some time within the cultural ambit of the Assyrian state. The term *našhūtu* “deportees” is not applied to them in the texts we have, so they should not be viewed as recent deportees, but perhaps as willing “agricultural colonists” taking part in a state programme of rural expansion. The texts we have are concerned with rations issued to them, so that they are economically dependent on the state, but included with the rations is an allocation for seed corn, at a level suggesting that each family may have been allocated a plot of 2 *iku* (~0.72 ha.) to cultivate (Jakob 2009, 98). Particularly tantalising is text No. 73 from Chuera, which does, as Jakob proposes, strongly suggest that similar arrangements may have been made for incoming “Assyrian” families (since children are mentioned), and that we may be right to see this as a deliberate state policy of encouraging agricultural colonisation within the private sector.

What is very evident is that the administration of land at Chuera was strongly determined both by the local environment and by the transient political circumstances, and should not be viewed as some kind of generalised organic process. Politically, the site of Tell Chuera may not have been a significant settlement under the Mittanian regime, but it certainly fell within Mittanian territory and the Assyrians must have represented a foreign power when they first took over the district. Environmentally, the prospects of a sequence of adequate annual rain-fed harvests must have been better than at Durkatlimmu, more than 100 kilometres further to the south and so receiving less annual rainfall, but there was probably less opportunity to cultivate a large area of irrigated land since Chuera is a long way from a major watercourse.

At Aššur the Urad-Šerua Archive contains a few texts which look as though they list plots of state land allocated to state employees (pp. 255–6).¹⁰⁷ While it is not clear how these tablets relate to the family's private archive, the mention of Urad-Šerua himself in No. 74 does suggest that they are not completely out of context. Each is different: No. 71 has difficulties of interpretation, but lists plots, ranging from 10 down to 2 *iku*, each associated with an individual; filiations are unfortunately not given, but some of these are names borne by highly placed members of the administration, and all bear good Assyrian names, which is compatible with their being members of the urban elite from Aššur. The plots are in a town or village whose name is damaged, but the following line appears to mention Nineveh. There is then the name of Aššur-našir, mayor (*haziānu*), and a line which seems most likely to read “of the writing-board of (*ša le-[i]*)” Mudammeq-Marduk. The tablet is impressed with a seal bearing Mudammeq-Marduk's name and giving his title as “Governor of the Land”; he and Aššur-našir the mayor again are similarly mentioned at the end of text No. 72, which lists houses assigned to some of the same individuals (and coincidentally is dated to his own eponymate).

The plot sizes in No. 71 are on average larger than those issued to the cadre of Assyrian staff at Tell Chuera (see p. 38),¹⁰⁸ and it seems that some of the recipients also received a house. If it is correct that they are some or all members of the Aššur establishment, it is unlikely that they would propose to reside permanently in this new house in a rural settlement, and we should probably regard these allocations as a form of prebendary remuneration which enabled them to maintain an economically dependent, if not socially inferior, family there and so to benefit as landlords from their cultivation of the agricultural plot.¹⁰⁹

Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta

Text No. 74 of the Urad-Šerua Archive is rather different; its obverse seems to mention issues of palace seed grain for the cultivation of areas of land, and on the reverse are listed a number of very highly placed individuals, including Libur-zanin-Aššur, royal eunuch, Aššur-bel-ilani, a royal representative (*qēpu*), and Urad-Šerua himself. It is unfortunate that so much of this tablet is lost that we cannot confidently reconstruct its content, but recently published texts from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta provide a dossier of evidence for the allocation of prebendary plots to state officials, including Libur-zanin-Aššur and others high in Tukulti-Ninurta's hierarchy (Freydank 2009a). One of the principal events of his reign was the creation of a new capital city, named after himself, on the left bank of the Tigris not far upstream from Aššur. This was called Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (The Port of Tukulti-Ninurta), and the site

¹⁰⁷ Postgate 1988a, pp. 174–87 with general discussion on pp. 182–4; these texts are similarly understood by Jakob 2009, 16¹⁵³, although the Šamaš-aḫa-iddina inheritance he refers to does not refer to land as such, only to *šiluhlu*-dependants.

¹⁰⁸ For the size of family plots see Wiggermann 2000, 181, 5 to 20 *iku*, citing Freydank 1980.

¹⁰⁹ Such a family might well be designated “villagers”, for which the Assyrian would be *ālāyu* (as attested in KAJ 7), and would differ from the *šiluhlu*.



Figure 2.3. Aerial view of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, 1973. © Georg Gerster/Panos.

(Tulul el-Aqr) was excavated by the Aššur expedition in 1913.¹¹⁰ One of his inscriptions, on a stone slab from the vicinity of the new ziqqurat, describes the initiative as follows:

Grayson, RIMA 1, 273–4 (A.0.78.23:88–109)

*i-na UD-mi-šu-ma e-ber-ti
URU-ia URU ba-it DINGIR.MEŠ ^daš-šur
EN ma-ḥa-za i-ri-ša-ni-ma e-peš
at-ma-ni-šu iq-ba-a a-na si-qir
^daš-šur DINGIR ra-i-mi-ia mu-ḥur-ti
URU-ia ^daš-šur i-ta-at ÍD.IDIGNA
i-na na-me-e A.GÀR.MEŠ ar-bu-ti
a-šar É ù šub-tu la ba-šú-ú
ti-lu ù e-pe-ru la šap-ku-ma
SIG₄.MEŠ la na-da-at URU ^daš-šur
i-na e-ber-ta-a-an lu e-púš
URU kar-¹GIŠ.KU-ti-^dnin-urta MU-šu
ab-bi áš-ri be-ru-ti ki-ma qe-e*

At that time the god Aššur, my lord, requested of me
a cult-centre, across from my city, the desire of the
gods, (and) commanded me to construct his shrine.

On the instruction of Aššur, the god who loves me,
facing my city Aššur, along the Tigris,
in a wasteland of deserted commonlands,
where there was no house or dwelling,
and no mounds or earth had been piled up,
(and) no bricks had been laid, a city of Aššur
I constructed on the opposite bank.
Its name I called Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta.
I sliced through wild places along (the

¹¹⁰ See Eickhoff 1985 for the 1913 work, and for the resumption of work in the 1980s Dittmann 1990. The substantial recent Iraqi work at the site is described in Mühl & Sulaiman 2011. For the provenance of the tablets, see pp. 82–3.

lu-se-lit pu-šuq ħur-ša-ni še-ru-ti
i-na NA₄ pa-li-ši lu-še-ti-iq
mi-ti-ir-ta mu-kín-na-at ZI-ti
ma-a-ti a-bi-la-at nu-uḫ-ši
uš-pél-ka-am-ma qar-bat URU-ia
a-na tam-ki-ri lu aš-kun i-na ħi-ši-ib
 A.MEŠ *pa-at-ti šu-a-ti gi-na-a*
a-na ^aaš-šur ù DINGIR.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ EN.MEŠ-ia
da-riš lu ar-ku-ús

mason's) string (and) cut through the steep slopes
 of high hills with stone borers,
 I opened up a canal sustaining the life of
 the land and bringing plenty, (and) I put the meadows
 of my city under irrigation.
 From the produce of the water
 from that channel I dedicated regular offerings
 to Aššur and the great gods my lords
 in perpetuity.

Here then the state was taking control of an area of previously uncultivated land, presumably on the terraces above the alluvial river flats, where an irrigation project from the Tigris or Lower Zab some distance upstream was needed. Tablets from the excavations allow us to glimpse the process of allocating the land in action. Some of it was designated the property of the palace and entrusted by the royal representatives (*qēpūte*) to officials for cultivation: an example of this is MARV 4.106, where the responsible person, Innamer, is simply called “the supervisor of the fields” (*ša UGU A.ŠĀ*). The tablet is sealed by Innamer, and is effectively a work and delivery contract, supplying him with seed corn and fodder for the plough oxen (but no rations for workers, unlike the Durkatlimmu texts), and requiring him to deliver the harvest.

MARV 4.106 Contract for Cultivation of State Land¹¹¹

KIŠIB *in-na-me-er*
 (seal impression)¹¹²

27 ANŠE ŠE.NUMUN
 4 ANŠE 1BÁN ŠUKU GU₄.MEŠ
i+na GIŠ.BÁN ša ħi-bur-ni
ša É.GAL-lim
ša É kar-me
ša ŠU qe-pu-te
ša ^{uu}kar-¹IGI.DUB-MAŠ
i+na UGU ¹in-na-me-er
ša UGU A.ŠĀ
a-na 90 A.ŠĀ
a-na me-re-še
š[a '] ʾx x xʾ -taʾ
a-na a-ra-še
ta-ad-na-áš-šu
te-li-it BURU₁₄
i-ma-da-ad
ù tup-pu-šu
i-ḥap-pi
 ITI *qar-ra-a-tu UD.21.KÁM*
li-mu ¹a-bat-tu

Seal of Innamer

27 homers, (for) seed corn
 4.1 homers, (for) the rations of the oxen
 in the *ḫiburnu sūtu*,
 belonging to the palace,
 of the granary,
 in the charge of the representatives
 of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta,
 (are) incumbent on Innamer,
 the field supervisor.
 For 90 (*iku*) of field
 for the cultivated land
 of [(a place name)]
 to cultivate it
 it is issued to him.
 The harvest yield
 he will measure out,
 and (then) his tablet
he may break.
 Month of Qarratu, 21st day,
 eponymate of Abattu.

¹¹¹ Edited in Freydank 2009a, 23.

¹¹² See MARV 4, p. 158 No. 21; Fischer 1999, 142 Nr. 18.

The eponym Abattu (presumably the first of that name) belongs at least 10 years into Tukulti-Ninurta's reign (Röllig no. 33¹¹³). MARV 9.62 (Freydank 2009a, 24) is a very similar bilateral contract drawn up on the same day between the Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta representatives and Maršanu, who is only identified by his father's name.

Here then we see the state retaining possession of the newly created fields and their produce, directly controlling the agricultural activity and employing its own officials in a contractual mode. A different mode is reflected in MARV 9.18. The lines summing up the content of this tablet run as follows:

PAB-ma 1010 IKU *me-ru-šu ša* ^{uru}*kar*–¹GIŠ.KU-ti–MAŠ
i-na lib-be 110 ANŠE EN.MEŠ ŠUKU.MEŠ
 44 ANŠE *a-na gi-na-e* 1 ANŠE 6BÁN *ša x[]x-ši-i*
 10 ANŠE ¹*me-li-ḫu-um-ba* 4² ANŠE 4BÁN 6 ŠILA NINDA³.MEŠ
 7 ANŠE 8BÁN ŠUKU ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ
 1 ANŠE 4BÁN 6 ŠILA MUNU⁵.MEŠ-*te*
te-li-it BURU₁₄ *ša li-me* ¹SU–^dAMAR.UTU

“Total: 1,010 *iku* cultivated land of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. Therefrom:

- 110 homers – prebend-holders
- 44 homers for the fixed offerings
- 1.6 homers
- 10 homers – Meliḫumba
- 4.46 homers bread²
- 7.8 homers – rations for the horses
- 1.46 homers – malt³

Harvest yield of the eponymate of Erib-Marduk.”

MARV 9.18: Rs. 22'–27' (Freydank 2009a, 53)

The first line of the tablet gave the column headings for three sets of figures: “Fields of dike² and farmstead?” (*A.ŠÀ ša E ù du-ni*), “Their grain yield” (*ŠE-um te-li-su-nu*) and “Fields they are not [cultivating]” (*A.ŠÀ la i-r[u-šu]*). While these categories are not entirely clear, the text does explicitly identify some of the produce as going to the fixed offerings, as Tukulti-Ninurta's inscription would lead us to expect, but also uses the term prebend-holders (EN.MEŠ ŠUKU.MEŠ), which provides confirmation that the practice of assigning plots of land to state officials, deduced from the texts from Aššur and elsewhere, can accurately be described in this way. The total of 110 homers assigned to prebend-holders is more than half the total yield. If each of them managed their own plots, it is unclear why the state should list their individual amounts, so possibly the entire area of 1,010 *iku* was farmed as a single operation and shares of the harvest were allocated to the prebend-holders and other recipients in proportion to their nominal landholdings.

This tablet, dated to Eriba-Marduk, comes from near the end of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign, but allocations of prebend land were certainly made earlier in the reign.¹¹⁴ The most detailed

¹¹³ For Röllig's list of eponyms see Appendix 2, with comment p. 53.

¹¹⁴ On the date of Eriba-Marduk cf. Freydank 2009a, 60¹⁰³.

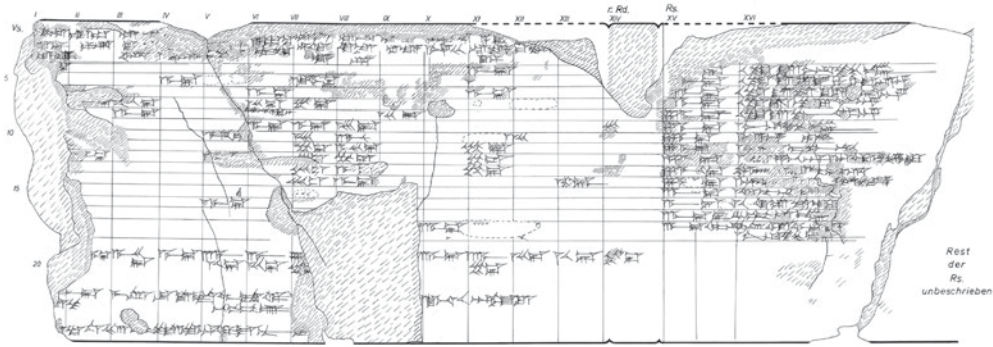


Figure 2.4. Land register from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (Freydank, MARV 4.173). © H. Freydank.

evidence for this is provided by the remarkable tablet VAT 21325 (MARV 4.173), dated some years earlier (Salmanu-šumu-ušur, Röllig 42, not before Tukulti-Ninurta's 18th year). It is, unusually, wider than it is high, and ruled into 16 columns which continue round the right-hand edge of the tablet and onto the reverse, contrary to the usual disposition of text on a cuneiform tablet.¹¹⁵ The reason for this unusual format is that the scribe needed to record the landholdings, arranged horizontally in Cols. i–xiv according to their location, assigned to some 15 individuals or groups, listed vertically in Col. xvi.3–18. The landholders include a number of high officials known from other texts, including Ušur-namkur-šarri, perhaps at this date the governor of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, and Aššur-tapputi. They are listed as individuals, but five of the entries are for the “decury” (10-*tu* = *ešartu*) of an individual, again including Ušur-namkur-šarri, but also the other well-attested eunuch of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign, Libur-zanin-Aššur, and Mušabši-Aššur, known as a son of the king and a *qēpu*.¹¹⁶ The landholding in xvi.17 is attributed to “the king”, and that in xvi.18 once again to Ušur-namkur-šarri. The headings for Col. i–xiv specify the location of the fields: these include at least four villages (ii, vii–ix),¹¹⁷ the “commonland” (A.GĀR) of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (xi) and of “the village of Ili-ayabaš” (i), a marsh area (*appāru*; ii) and a lake (“small sea”, vi). Col. xii mentions an orchard, and in Col. x probably “the cultivated area of Ušur-namkur-šarri”.

The documentation from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, which includes further texts attesting to the prebend regime, discussed at length in Freydank (2009a), reflects a similar situation to Tell Chuera, in the sense that we are looking at land brought into cultivation by the state's initiative, partly managed directly as a state enterprise and partly assigned to servants of the state in remuneration for their service. The Assyrian occupation, one may almost say colonisation, of the western territories referred to as Hanigalbat goes well back into the reign

¹¹⁵ See Freydank 2009a, 25 on this, and 24–37 on the text as a whole.

¹¹⁶ For the “decury” (division of ten men) see p. 287 (& Jakob 2003, 29²⁰² on MARV 4.127 and MARV 4.173).

¹¹⁷ The village in Col. vii is URU ša DINGIR-KI-ia “of Ilu-ittiya”. The men of this village (URU ša DINGIR-ti-ie-e) are listed under an officer as “marked men” on the writing-board of Adad-šamši in MARV 1.5:16 (same *limmu* year as MARV 4.173), but it does not seem to me certain, or even probable that it is the same village as encountered in the Ass. 14446 archive as “of Ili-itti-ilu”, pace Freydank 2009a, 32 and Nashef 1982, 22. As Freydank observes, this would extend the geographical scope across the Tigris to the Wadi Tharthar well to the west.

of Shalmaneser, and by the time Tukulti-Ninurta came to the throne there were decades of experience of establishing and administering state-controlled cereal production and allocating plots of land to provide for the subsistence of employees of the state (cf. Freydank 2009a, 58). It may have been exceptional, in that land so close to the capital would surely have been exploited earlier if it had not required irrigation, and was therefore dependent on the royal project to secure the labour for constructing an entirely new canal. The fragmentary evidence discussed earlier from the Urad-Šerua Archive for prebend land assigned to high state officials in the Nineveh region seems to show that the state disposed of land in the provinces for this purpose, but it is hard to be sure whether this was because it had no suitable land nearer to the capital, or because the higher rainfall on land further north made it preferable.

Tell Sabi Abyad

The most detailed picture of an Assyrian agricultural enterprise will surely come from the much larger archive from Tell Sabi Abyad. While the majority of the texts from here are still to be published, very significant work has already been done by Wiggermann in reconstructing the conditions revealed by the archive.¹¹⁸ Today the mound of Sabi Abyad sits in the valley of the Balih river, east of the main stream, some 45 kilometres south of Ḫarran and west of Tell Chuera. A Neolithic settlement had left a tell on which a small fortified farmstead was erected in the Mittanian period. With the arrival of Assyrian rule, probably under Shalmaneser I, a new fortified building occupying 60 by 60 metres (perhaps not coincidentally one *iku*) was constructed on the site of the Mittanian fort, and from within the walls of this enclosure the Dutch expedition recovered an archive of about 315 tablets (Wiggermann 2000, 175⁶). The settlement was a *dunnu* “fortified farmstead”, and for much of its existence it was the property of the Chief Chancellor (*sukkallu rabiū*), Ili-pada, who was a member of the parallel royal dynasty sometimes given the title “King of Ḫanigalbat”, and contemporary with the later years of Tukulti-Ninurta I.¹¹⁹ The majority of the tablets derive from the archives of the stewards (AGRIG) who controlled the activities of the *dunnu*: for most of the period covered this was Tammitte, but before him Mannu-ki-Adad also served his time as the steward.¹²⁰ The final publication of the complete archive will doubtless shed much light on the role of the stewards in the *dunnu*. It appears to have been organised very much along the same lines as state establishments in the provinces such as Ḫarbu and Durkatlimmu. Tammitte managed as many as ten flock-masters (*nāqīdu*), and was authorised to exact a penalty of 100 strokes on them if they missed the annual count,¹²¹ while his predecessor Mannu-ki-Adad’s duties included issuing sickles to the workforce:

Sabi Abyad T96–3 (Wiggermann 2000, 207)

20 *ni-gál-lu* ZABAR

20 sickles of bronze

ša ¹*ma-nu-ki-i*–10

belonging to Mannu-ki-Adad,

¹¹⁸ Primarily Wiggermann 2000.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., 172; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999b; on his seal, Wiggermann 2006.

¹²⁰ Wiggermann 2000, 172.

¹²¹ Ibid., 200.

LÚ.AGR[IG]	the steward,
¹ i-ga-ar-še-i-mi-id	Igaršemid
a-na e-ša-di	has received for harvesting.
ma-ḫi-ir	
A.ŠĀ i-ši-id	He shall harvest the field,
[n]i-gál-li	give (back) the sickles,
i-dan	
ù tup-pu-šu	and (may then) break
i-ḫap-pi	<u>his tablet.</u>
ITI ša sa-ra-ti	Month Ša-sarrati
UD.13.KĀM li-mu	13th day, eponymate of
¹ a-bat-tu	Abattu (33).

Igaršemid is known from other texts as a “chief farmer” (*rab ekkārāte*), a position the Durkatlimmu texts clearly show to be a farm manager. The archive covers other aspects of the agricultural regime (including animal husbandry), and Wiggermann has estimated that the area of land falling under the steward’s administration equated rather neatly to the area of low-lying irrigable land in the vicinity of the mound. He reckons therefore that virtually all the *dunnus* would have been irrigated (like a small proportion of the state fields at Durkatlimmu); the yield may support this, the great majority of the irrigated area was presumably given over to grain, and much good-quality wheat was recovered from the site, but a small area would have been assigned to sesame and garden plants. The grain enterprise was entrusted to a staff of chief farmers, as at Durkatlimmu, and from the number of sickles issued to them Wiggermann has concluded (188) that they would each have been responsible for a farm of 200 *iku*, very much in line with similar evidence from Aššur. The labour force on the fields at Sabi Abyad appears to have been rather evenly divided between free families of farmers and the dependent workers called *šiluhlu*, both totalling about 400 persons. This provides the best evidence we have at present for the social condition of the *šiluhlu* class.

Summary

To sum up, there was a long-standing tradition of private ownership of real estate at Aššur, which is illustrated by the provisional conveyance arrangements built into loan transactions between urban families and indigent villagers in the 14th century: these indicate that village communities tightly administered land property rights within their territory, but were unable to prevent individual members of the community from selling their property rights outside the village, which may have forced a suspension of the traditional system of annual allocation of plots by lot. The eventual final sale of such landholdings had to be publicly announced in Aššur and in the village in question, the land had to be surveyed and the king had, nominally at least, to be involved in the transaction. At one provincial centre, Tell al-Rimah, land sale also had to be announced by herald in accordance with royal decree.

It is reasonable to assume that across previously settled territories the Assyrian state found an established land tenure regime which saw most land as property of the local population, in practice if not in theory, and that on the whole such rights would have been respected.

This would not have prevented urban elites from using their economic power to acquire land and although hard evidence for this is scattered and scanty, it appears likely that there was a widespread tenant-farmer relationship resulting from the pledging of both land and persons as security for debts, expressed in some instances by the term villager (*ālāyu*). Another example of the urban elite acquiring land in the provinces is supplied by two texts from the Archive of Babu-aḫa-iddina, but the details of the legal formalities are lacking (texts 31 and 36 see Table 4.11 p. 206).

While there is no clear evidence for the confiscation of land by the state, we do have plenty of evidence for the existence of state-owned (or at least, state-controlled) agricultural land, especially around Durkatlimmu and Ḫarbu (Tell Chuera) in the mid-13th century and later in the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta around his new capital of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. The areas are not vast, and it seems at least possible that in all cases we are looking at previously unused tracts which the state has brought into cultivation in pursuit of a deliberate policy of agricultural expansion, such as is described in explicit terms by Tiglath-pileser I and by later Assyrian kings in their inscriptions. Such plots, if directly farmed by the state, provided grain for the state's granaries in its provincial capitals which was also at the disposal of the central government, and was used to feed the state's dependent workers and other rationed employees. Other plots could be allocated as prebend land to state office holders: the actual cultivation would probably be carried out by tenant or otherwise dependent families, whether villagers or *šiluhlu*. The state could also draw on provincial granaries to provide rations for deported populations, who would in due course be settled on state land, very likely as *šiluhlu*, while at Ḫarbu in particular there is evidence that free families were also installed on land with state help.

Before moving on, two points should be stressed: that what we can say about the Assyrian land regime is of course entirely dependent on the tablets and the scribes who wrote them, and that the occasion for writing a text is almost always a shift in the status quo. Tukulti-Ninurta's account of his Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta project is celebrating a major initiative, but legal or administrative tablets are concerned with change to the existing order: pledges and sales, reflecting economic trends within society, or initiatives to bring fresh land into cultivation in response either to the availability of a fresh workforce or to the creation of newly cultivable spaces resulting from irrigation projects. And all these records depend on the scribes, whether they worked for the royal palace or a provincial governor, or were employed by private households.

The Scribes¹

Almost any Middle Assyrian legal document will record the presence of “PN₁, the scribe, son of PN₂” as the final name in the list of witnesses. This is both traditional and understandable, since there is always the possibility that witnesses may be called on by the judicial system in the case of a dispute, and the scribe is obviously a significant member of the group since he must perforce have been aware of the circumstances of the transaction he was recording. Wherever we find legal documents concerned with loans, purchases or commercial transactions we can be sure that scribes were present, and this must apply as much to rural centres like Šibaniba, Tell al-Rimah (Karana/Qatara) or Giricano in the far north as it does to Aššur. Society’s demand for written documentation facilitating legal and commercial affairs would have ensured the presence of scribal expertise. As Nissen has shown in the case of the 14th-century private archive Ass. 14446, the scribes tended to come from the same urban background as the Aššur families who were creditors and eventually purchasers of land, unlike most of the other witnesses who came from the rural settlements where the pledged land was located (Nissen 1967). There may well have been families which specialised in the scribal profession, as we see in other times and places, and we do occasionally come across scribes whose fathers were also scribes.² A comparison with Nuzi suggests that in the earlier years (15th to 14th century) scribal expertise may have been imported from Babylonia. At the upper end of the social spectrum, a scribe called Marduk-nadin-aḫḫe, working for King Aššur-uballiṭ in the 14th century, belonged to a Babylonian scribal family,³ but as the demands of the administration grew with the expansion of Assyrian territory it may well be that an injection of southern expertise continued to be needed at a lower level.⁴ At some stage much of the Mesopotamian textual traditions maintained in Babylonian literary dialect must

¹ *Scribe* is usually written (LÚ.)DUB.SAR, traditionally read *tupšarru* (though this should perhaps be *tupšarru*, see p. 65 and CAD T 148b). (LÚ.)A.BA is also used infrequently in Middle Assyrian texts (Jakob 2003, 237; and regularly in the 11th-century tablets from Giricano). The impression that A.BA tended to be used when a scribe was short of space or time (seven instead of about eighteen wedges!) is reinforced by two of the rare 13th-century instances (KAJ 101 and MARV 1.47) where A.BA is used by the scribe at the end of lists of witnesses who are unusually not given their patronymics. Note the comments of Deller 1982, 151–2.

² Some examples in Wiggermann 2008, 209–10; Deller 1982; witnessing a tablet from Nineveh: Postgate 1973a, 17; cf. now the comments of Cancik-Kirschbaum 2012, 20.

³ On Marduk-nadin-aḫḫe, the Babylonian “scribe of the king,” and his family, see Wiggermann 2008.

⁴ Thus one Babylonian scribe called Burruqu, still listed in MARV 4.1 as one of a group of “captured persons” (ÉRIN. MEŠ *šabbūtūtu*), is recorded as the “creditor” in a loan of five bronze axes from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (cf. Wiggermann 2008, 214–15). For the possible Babylonian origin of the scribal family of Ninurta-uballissu in the 12th century, cf. Bloch 2010a.

have come north from Babylonia along with those competent to read and write them, and we have the names of some of the scribes who wrote such tablets in the colophons of literary, scholarly and scientific texts.⁵ By contrast, the scribes who wrote most administrative documents were remarkably self-effacing: it was not the practice to mention the identity of the scribe unless the document was witnessed.⁶ This is not of course exceptional: Neo-Assyrian legal documents regularly conclude the list of witnesses with the name of the scribe, sometimes adding “who drew up the tablet” (*šābit tuppi*),⁷ but in an administrative document we do not expect to be told the name of the person who wrote it. The same situation seems to prevail as far away as contemporary Greece, where all surviving Linear B documents are anonymous and do not betray the names or other identities of those who wrote them.⁸

Self-evidently, tablets must have been written by someone trained in the cuneiform script and the associated conventions, but whether all such persons would have been called “scribe” we cannot tell. It is at least possible that some of the other members of the administration were expected to be literate, or that persons trained as scribes were later entrusted with more specialised administrative roles which would be mentioned in preference to mere “scribe” and so mask their earlier training. However, that not all administrators in Babu-aḥa-iddina’s service were adequately literate is apparent from text No. 22 in his archive where a correspondent writes to the house supervisor, Kidin-Gula: “I am sending you Adad-kena-uṣur, the scribe, – write your tablet and send it to Babu-aḥa-iddina”. It is frustrating that in several of our archives, from the entire Offerings Archive with its wide time span to Mutta’s texts which cover no more than a single year, we learn the names of the officials who carried out the administration, among whom one or more must have been responsible for writing the tablets, but the internal nature of the documentation made it unnecessary for them to specify the profession and/or the filiation of these individuals, so that we cannot identify the scribes with certainty.

Apart from elevated persons like Aššur-šumi-ašbat “scribe of the King” (Figure 3.1),⁹ or the “scribe of the Palace” and the “scribe of the city”,¹⁰ there were undoubtedly more humble members of the administration whose primary function was indeed to act as a scribe.¹¹ In one of the lengthy account tablets recording grain issues to state employees engaged in the construction of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta we find listed “37 exorcists, 17 diviners, 40 scribes in the charge of the Governor of the Land, 22 scribes in the charge of the Steward”,¹² and it is clear

⁵ See especially Jakob 2003, 256–8.

⁶ Like much of the following section, this observation has already been made by Jakob in summarising his comprehensive and invaluable survey of the mentions of scribes in Middle Assyrian texts (2003, 260–1).

⁷ For the Neo-Assyrian scribes in general, and specifically their role in the legal documents, see Radner 1997, 80–124. For the phrase *šābit tuppi* and its meaning (not “who retains the tablet”, pace Radner), see Postgate 2011b.

⁸ Palaima 2003, 153. For the possibility that we might be able to deduce their names, J. Bennet refers me to Bennet 2001; Kyriakidis 1996–7.

⁹ As edited by Deller 1982; it is not clear whether it is he or his father, Ribate, who is the royal scribe (A.BA MAN).

¹⁰ For these see Jakob 2003, 236–7, and on royal scribes see also Wiggermann 2008.

¹¹ Fischer (1999) notes that some of the scribes had relatively low-quality seals (Nos. 31–4).

¹² MARV 2.17.36–7: 37 *a-ši-pu*^{mes} 17 LÚ.ḪAL.MEŠ 40 DUB.SAR.MEŠ *ša* ŠU *ša-kín* K[UR] 22 DUB. SAR.MEŠ *ša* ŠU AGRIG.



Figure 3.1. Seal of the scribe Aššur-šumi-ašbat. Courtesy P. Amiet.

that these were under the command of a “chief scribe” called Adad-remanni since another tablet from the same occasion lists in order the chief exorcist and the chief diviner, followed by “Adad-remanni, the chief scribe in the charge of the Governor of the Land, Abu-ṭab, the ditto (=chief scribe) in the charge of the Steward”.¹³ At Aššur (or Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta), some or all of these scribes were attached to the *bēt tuppāte* “tablet house” (see Jakob 2003, 256 on MARV 2.6: Rs. 88”-91”), where, we learn, this long list of deported families has been checked “in accordance with the formally-executed tablet of the Tablet House”,¹⁴ suggesting that this was a central records office where the administration stored documentation to which it needed to refer, including sealed bilateral documents recording the liabilities of individual officials. We have no clue where this establishment might have been, whether it was inside one of the palaces or in a separate building outside, but it can hardly have been far from one palace or another. There are no grounds for thinking that the “Tablet House” was a school for scribes, and in the Middle Assyrian sources, we do not have any clues as to how and where the scribes were trained: doubtless the administration must have taken steps to ensure that it had the necessary staff, but a lively demand for trained scribes must also have persisted in the

¹³ MARV 1.5:2-5: ¹10-*re-ma-ni* GAL DUB.SAR.MEŠ *ša* ŠU *ša-kín* KUR [¹]*a-bu-DÛG*.GA GAL KIMIN *ša* ŠU AGRIG.

¹⁴ *a-na pi-i tup-pi ṣa-bi-it-te ṣa Ê tup-pa-te e-ta-áš-ru.*

private sector, and we cannot rule out the possibility that a single scribe might have served in both private and public spheres.

Although we hear nothing of the training of scribes, there can be no doubt that there was a collective scribal tradition to which they adhered. Plenty of lexical texts were found at Aššur among the Middle Assyrian library scattered across the north-east part of the city, but these are all in the Babylonian tradition. Although there is the Akkadian synonym series *Malku=šarru*, it is compiled from Babylonian vocabulary and the lemmata are in their Babylonian dialect forms. There is a predilection for using Sumerograms in legal documents,¹⁵ no doubt to enhance the sense of formality, yet the scribes in Assyria wrote their letters, legal documents and administrative records in Assyrian dialect, so that training in such lexical texts and learned terminology only contributed indirectly or marginally to their everyday professional tasks. From Neo-Assyrian times we have a couple of texts known as the “Practical Vocabulary of Aššur” and the “Practical Vocabulary of Nineveh”,¹⁶ which list “useful” words (like *vinegar*, *lamb* or *brick*) in their Assyrian forms, and two lists of Neo-Assyrian professions,¹⁷ but nothing of this kind has to my knowledge yet surfaced from Middle Assyrian contexts.

Scribes did not merely write, but composed text as well. Some, if not all, were trained to draw up legal documents correctly and were numerate enough to prepare accounts. This is an assumption for Assyria, but in contemporary Babylonia Arad-Ea and Uballissu-Marduk, the uncle and cousin of Marduk-nadin-aḫḫe, Aššur-uballiṭ’s Babylonian scribe, claimed the title of “accounts expert” (LÚ.UM.MI.A NÍG.KAS₉) on their cylinder seals, and it seems likely that Marduk-nadin-aḫḫe himself would have been competent in such matters. Although the archives from Aššur rarely betray the identity of the scribes who wrote them or reveal the extent of their precise roles in the administration, this is not always the case in the provinces. There a separate scribal organisation can hardly have been needed, and at Durkatlimmu we see one of the senior administrators, with the title of *qēpu* “representative” regularly operating in a twosome with a scribe,¹⁸ with comparable pairings attested in other contexts such as the delivery of grain to Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta from the town of Sin-rabi.¹⁹ This is in no way surprising, and indeed at Nuzi too we have cases where lists are compiled by a “team of administrator and scribe”.²⁰ Occasionally a scribe himself is given the role of representative (*qēpu*), one example being MARV 4.31,

¹⁵ Cf. Postgate 2011a, 92 citing as examples ŠU.BA.AN.TI for *ilqe*, MUNUS.KALAG.GA for (*tuppu*) *dannutu* and Ī.ĀG.E for *imaddad*.

¹⁶ Landsberger & Gurney 1957–8.

¹⁷ Civil (ed.) 1969, 233–41, from Sultantepe and Kuyunjik.

¹⁸ E.g. Röllig 2008 No. 60:25–6; for this pairing see p. 312.

¹⁹ MARV 4.30:4–6: Aššur-iddin and Mušallim-Marduk LÚ.DUB.SAR; the same pair make a similar delivery from the same source in MARV 4.27:4–6, although there where “scribe” might have been written there is only an erasure. MARV 1.25 is a sealed envelope in which Izbu-lešir acknowledges receipt of 54.5 homers of grain, fixed offering of Idu, from two persons, the second one a scribe.

²⁰ Stein 1993, 38.

where Aššur-dammeq, a scribe and a *qēpu*, has been put in charge of “king’s troops ... who have been doing work at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta for five days on the instructions of Ušur-namkur-šarri the steward”.²¹ Ušur-namkur-šarri, now the governor of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, is also the superior official in MARV 8.21, where a scribe called Ḫamsanu is one of two officials called *qēpūte* who are responsible for grain issued to a craftsman making shield components.

Time and Measure

One of the necessary skills of the scribe was to record time and metrological details accurately. Given the nature of the archives treated here, almost every tablet we meet will have a measure of time or of a commodity, and usually both, and it is impossible to escape the technical terminology involved. Before addressing the texts directly, therefore, this section describes the essential details of how time was recorded and quantities measured. This is purely for the convenience of the reader, and there is nothing here which overturns the current consensus among Assyriologists, even if there are inevitably personal idiosyncrasies in the transliterations and choices for translation.

Time

The Mesopotamians were very keen on logging time, and had been for more than a millennium. Thus we can expect any legal document to be dated by day, month and year. Within the administration, occasional informal jottings may not have a date, but the great majority of even unilateral documents are dated. This was so routine that one suspects it was second nature to the scribes, and they may not have always asked themselves why they were adding the date, but in some cases it may have been in the essence of the document. Thus with private legal contracts where the repayment of a loan within a set time is required, or where interest accumulated with the passage of time, the date of the initial transaction was critical.²² And similarly many of the internal records of the Offerings House are concerned with the fulfilment of offerings provision over a precisely defined period of time (see p. 129).

For most of the second millennium, the Assyrians used a traditional calendar with 12 months. Their names virtually all went back to Old Assyrian times.²³

²¹ Similar context in MARV 4.27:33 Sin-gimlanni, DUB.SAR *qe-pu* (cf. Fischer 1999, 149 Nr. 34 for the seal impression on this tablet). In MARV 6.86:16 we have “Ḫadu, the scribe, representative (*qēpi*) of Arbail” paired with the governor of Ḫabriuri.

²² Considerations like this make the lack of dating in the texts from Nuzi, Alalakh and Ugarit even more surprising.

²³ Interestingly, the old town of T abete on the Middle Ḫabur, which had semi-independent status, retained a different calendar with month names which reach back to the Mari period (see e.g. Shibata 2012), underlining its nominal independence.

The Middle Assyrian Months²⁴

I	Bēlat ēkalli	Goddess Lady of the Palace
II	Ša sarrāte	Of crimes
III	Ša kēnāte	Of righteousnesses
IV	Muḥur ilāni	Presentation to the gods
V	Ap(u) šarrāni	Kings' funerary libation
VI	Ḫibur	
VII	Šippu	
VIII	Qarrātu	
IX	Kalmarte	
X	Sin	Moon-god (Sin)
XI	Kuzallu	
XII	Allānātu	Oak trees

When preparing annual statements the Assyrian accountants reckoned that each month had 30 days, and there is no clear evidence that this differed from normal calendrical practice in society as a whole.²⁵ A 360-day year would drop behind the solar year by 5 1/4 days each year, and by a month approximately every 6 years.²⁶ On the other hand, Hunger, following Weidner, reckons with a lunar year of 354 days, which would imply 6 months of 29 days (=174) plus 6 months of 30 days (=180).²⁷ Whether the official calendar had a year of 354 or of 360 days, there is no sign in the Middle Assyrian calendar of the intercalary months which had been used for centuries in Babylonia to adjust the lunar to the solar year, and we must presume that the months shifted progressively in relation to the seasons. Since the Assyrian officials were in the habit of drawing up their annual accounts in the same month (Ḫibur) and often on the same day (20th),²⁸ this can hardly have been convenient in a largely agricultural economy. During or perhaps just before the reign of Tiglath-pileser I,²⁹ it was decided to adopt the Babylonian months, presumably so as to benefit from the intercalary system which saw to it that months remained in approximately the same season of the year by inserting one, or exceptionally two, additional months when required, thereby also ensuring that each new year could begin with the same month (Nisannu). Documents from about this time sometimes have datings by both calendrical systems, and the Babylonian months are

²⁴ Numbering after Hunger 1976–80, 301.

²⁵ So Freydank 1991d, 81, on the basis of texts from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, later confirmed by similar documents from Durkatlimmu (Röllig 2008); he also gives examples of the 30th day, to which we may add at least: VAT 19978 (MARV 7.2) and Donbaz 1976, Pl. 10 A. 1812:10. Proof that any month had only 29 days is difficult to pin down.

²⁶ Freydank 2003b, 30.

²⁷ See Freydank 1991d, 81; Hunger 1976–80, 299; following Weidner 1935–6, 28–9. With a 354-day year, the same day of the monthly calendar would fall on the same day of the solar year once every 33 years.

²⁸ See p. 304.

²⁹ See Freydank 1991d, 86 for an argument for placing the adoption of the Babylonian calendar under Tiglath-pileser's predecessor, Aššur-reša-iši.

frequently equated with different Assyrian months, confirming that this slippage in relation to the seasons did take place when the traditional Assyrian calendar was still in use.³⁰

Years in Assyria were named after eponyms, ostensibly chosen by lot (at least in the 9th century); the word *limmu*, of unknown etymology, refers to the eponymate (rather than the eponym, although in modern usage we often refer to the eponyms as *limmus*), as the phrasing *limmu ša* PN demonstrates.³¹ Undoubtedly the Assyrian scribes kept or had access to a list of these eponyms, but unfortunately – and slightly surprisingly – we have as yet only a single fragmentary eponym list beginning as early as the 12th century, and none from earlier.³² Discovery of one would transform Middle Assyrian studies; for the time being the painstaking work of Saporetti (1979) and Freydank (1991d; 2005a) has given us a rough idea of when most eponyms were in office, with occasional well-established sequences, but for most names we are still restricted to an approximate attribution to reign. From the data supplied by the Durkatlimmu texts, Röllig, building on his own and Freydank's earlier work, was able to offer a provisional sequence of forty-five eponyms from the end of Shalmaneser's reign and the first half of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign (see Appendix 2).³³ When dealing with this period in Middle Assyrian history, I have often used Röllig's numbering because this is the easiest way of presenting a known position in the sequence. It cannot be taken as the final word, which will only come when an intact eponym list is finally recovered. There are surely a few names still to be inserted.³⁴

The remaining uncertainties make it impossible to tie this sequence to precise dates BC, although the evidence of the Assyrian King List combined with other sources does give us absolute dates for the kings' reigns back into the 14th century, with a ten year uncertainty affecting dates before Aššur-reša-iši (who acceded in 1132 BC). The sequence of kings for our period and their dates are given after Freydank (1991d) in Appendix 1.³⁵

Metrology

As we have already seen, the Assyrian world was commercial and literate. Private debts or administrative obligations were defined quantitatively so as to enable accurate repayment or delivery. This is not the place to enter into a metrological dissertation, but since the units of measurement used by the scribes inevitably turn up in textual citations, and we do need to have at least an approximate idea of the absolute value of these measures, some introductory comment is needed. Of course some items, such as persons, animals and chariots, were not measured but counted, though obviously their nature, age and quality would be significant, and the scribal class, or the state administration, developed recognised criteria by which these were defined (see for instance on persons p. 20, or animals p. 295, at Tell Ali). Three

³⁰ A list of such double datings can be found in Freydank 1991d, 82–3.

³¹ See Freydank 2003b, 29–30.

³² KAV 21 begins at least as early as Tiglath-pileser I (see Millard 1994, 7–8, 18–19; Saporetti 1979, 163–4).

³³ Röllig 2008, 4.

³⁴ Cf. Bloch 2010b,c, but also Freydank 2011b, 348–50 and Llop 2013.

³⁵ See there for my use of the ten-year-earlier date range before the reign of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur.

Table 3.1. *The principal weights in use*

	A	B	C	D		E	F
1	talent	<i>bilat</i>	<i>biltu</i>	GÚ.UN	= 60 minas	27.18 kg	30 kg
1	mina	<i>mana</i>	<i>manû</i>	MA.NA	= 60 shekels	453 g	500 g
1	shekel	<i>šiqil</i>	<i>šiqu</i>	GÍN		7.55 g	8 g

A: English equivalent from biblical or Classical usage.
B: Akkadian in status absolutus form used to record measurement.
C: Akkadian in status rectus form (dictionary lemma).
D: logographic writing (almost invariably used).
E: current best guess as to precise equivalent in modern metric system (after Powell 1989–90, 510).
F: approximation in modern metric value, used here to emphasise that the values in E remain uncertain.

metrological systems constantly recur in a variety of contexts: weight, capacity and surface area. Measures of length or distance do occur, but are not described here: for these, and all matters of mensuration generally Powell (1989–90) should be consulted.

Weights

In Middle Assyrian texts, fractions of the shekel are occasionally encountered when weighing gold. One such fraction is called a *bitqu*: $\frac{5}{6}$ MA.NA ù *bit-qa* KÛ.GI “ $\frac{5}{6}$ minas plus 1 fraction of gold” (MARV 8.89:8, cf. 12), known in Babylonian to be one-eighth of a shekel (Powell 1989–90, 512); for others the logogram SIG₄, of unknown reading and value, is used (fraction of gold MARV 8.89+4.114:5).³⁶

In the documents studied here, weight is encountered most frequently applied to metal or wool, either as the sole descriptor of raw materials (“2 minas of copper”, “4 talents of wool”) or as additional information about a manufactured product “1 adze of copper, weighing 2 minas”, “4 cloaks of wool, weighing 6 minas each”. The weighing of metals was particularly important, since metals regularly served as currency. While in late second-millennium Babylonia, and also at Nuzi, gold was sometimes used as a standard of value, in contemporary Assyria, gold is normally only encountered when the scribes are referring to the manufacture or transmission of jewellery or other precious items in gold.³⁷ Silver is used as a currency, especially in commercial contexts, and so are copper and bronze. Some at least of the bronze was alloyed from copper and tin, as shown by Babu-aḥa-iddina text No. 10 (=KAV 205) where 1 mina of copper and 7 1/2 shekels of tin are alloyed by the smith to make a variety of small implements (a metallurgically plausible percentage of 8 per cent). The term for tin here is AN.NA BABBAR = *annuku paši’u* “white tin”,³⁸ and this distinguishes it from plain

³⁶ On this text cf. Llop 2010c, 351.
³⁷ Two *šulmānu* texts of Urad-Šerua (Postgate 1988a, Nos. 17, 18) are a rare exception; in each case just half a shekel of gold is promised. See Müller 1982, 272.
³⁸ My father told me that a familiar street cry when he lived in Cairo came from the gentlemen who re-tinned domestic copperware and went past the house shouting *mubeyyidh an-nuḥās* “whitener of copper”.

Table 3.2. *The principal capacity measures in use*

	A	B	C	D		E	F
1	homer	<i>emār</i>	<i>emāru</i>	ANŠE	= 10 <i>sūtu</i>	80 litres	100 litres
1	seah	?	<i>sūtu</i>	(GIŠ.)BÁN	= 10 <i>qû</i>	8 litres	10 litres
1		<i>qa</i>	<i>q(a')û</i>	SÎLA		0.8 litre	1 litre

(for codes see Table 3.1)

annuku (AN.NA), which in Middle Assyrian is frequently used as currency and (in contrast to Old Assyrian) probably usually means “lead”: this meaning is made explicit in MARV 3.2, where the word *abāru* is added after *annuku* to contrast it with *annuku pašī'u*.³⁹ The frequent use of lead may surprise, and seems to be peculiar to Assyria,⁴⁰ but note the considerable volume of lead used by Tukulti-Ninurta for five inscribed slabs measuring about 75 by 38 cm each, when laying the foundations of the Ištar Temple.⁴¹

Capacity Measures

Wet and dry capacity shared part of their systems, though the smaller units diverge. In most respects the Middle Assyrian capacity system is relatively simple, compared with some of the complexities which beset earlier Mesopotamian practice (see Table 3.2).

When amounts smaller than a *qû* are recorded for dry capacity, fractions (most often one-half) are used. With some liquids (including honey, oil and beer), smaller amounts are counted in “cups” (*kāsu* pl. *kāsāte*, also written GÛ.ZI, MARV 7.1); it must have been a small cup, as up to four “cups” are attested, evidently holding no more than one-fifth of a litre (MARV 7.34:2).

In this book I have not succeeded in establishing consistency in nomenclature. Traditionally Assyriologists have written about “homers”, a form found in the English Bible and derived from the biblical Hebrew equivalent. The “donkey(-load)”, of which the Assyrian form is *emāru* rather than *imēru*, is a measure native to northern Mesopotamia, making its appearance at least as early as the Mari letters, and which was apparently borrowed into West Semitic. Unfortunately the biblical form *seah* corresponding to the *sūtu* is less favoured, and I know of no colleague who writes about *kav* (for *qû*). With the *sūtu* the problem is that we do not know the Babylonian, let alone the Assyrian, form of the status absolutus, though it is sometimes rendered as *sāt*. Likewise, it seems probable that in the status absolutus (and therefore in many of our contexts), the Assyrian equivalent of the Sumerian SÎLA was pro-

³⁹ See Freydank 1982a for a full discussion of this text, and note his surely correct comments on the translation of simple AN.NA as “lead” in other texts, p. 74²⁷. On the use of lead in Assyria see further Müller 1982. The objections of Monroe 2009 are misconceived, but one cannot be sure that plain *annuku* refers to lead in every case (and at Nuzi it seems to be tacitly assumed that it does mean tin).

⁴⁰ Though note the considerable amount of lead reported from the Ugaritic North Palace at Ras ibn Hani (Bordreuil et al. 1984, 405⁷).

⁴¹ See Grayson 1987, 253.

nounced as /qa/, but we do not know if the Assyrian status rectus would have been *qû* (as presumably it was in contemporary Babylonia) or, perhaps more likely, *qa'u*. Reluctantly, I have opted to use the inconsistent trio of homer, *sûtu* and *qû*.

A further complication about the *sûtu* is imposed by the graphic tradition. Going back more than a millennium, there are distinct cuneiform signs to render 2, 3, 4 and 5 *sûtu*. Although the Babylonian lexical tradition offers full-blown Sumerian “pronunciations” of these multiples (e.g. 3 *sûtu* = *baneš*), it seems unlikely that the Assyrian scribes thought along those lines, and I have followed Karlheinz Deller by writing 1BÂN, 2BÂN and so forth, without a space, to signal that we are dealing with a single sign.⁴² This is relatively unproblematical, but further problems arise with 6, 7, 8 and 9 *sûtu*. These are written with a vertical wedge, which has its origin in the Babylonian script where it denoted 1 *pānu* or *paršiktu* (composed of 6 *sûtu*), followed for 7, 8 and 9 *sûtu* by the signs for 1, 2 and 3 *sûtu* respectively. In the southern system, 5 *pānu* would have composed a single *kurru* (wr. GUR), and there were special signs for 2, 3 and 4 *pānu* (Borger 2003, 439–41 nos. 848, 850, 853); but in Assyrian, the homer of 10 *sûtu* was the largest unit in use, and with the convenience of the decimal relationship also present in the number of *qû* in the *sûtu*, this must have made the *pānu* a useless concept. Hence I suspect that the signs which we might formally transcribe as 1(nigida) 1BÂN (and some do) would have been perceived as simply standing for 7 *sûtu* by the ordinary scribe. As in Neo-Assyrian texts I have therefore eschewed such technically justifiable but unwieldy transcriptions in favour of simple 7BÂN, 8BÂN and 9BÂN. In translation, whenever the context allows, I have aimed to express the *sûtu* and *qû* merely as decimal fractions of the homer, because I believe this makes it easier to perceive the volumes as a reality.

Area Measures

Middle Assyrian surface mensuration drew on Babylonian terminology (Powell 1989–90, 486). Almost the only unit employed is the *iku*, written with the GÂN sign, which has its origin as a pictogram of an irrigated field. This is traditionally equated with 60 by 60 metres (=3600 m²), and the northern tradition uses no higher unit, so that we find areas expressed in hundreds of *iku* (e.g. in the Durkatlimmu harvest records).

Middle Assyrian Documentation

Writing in Assyria

Before examining the corpus of Middle Assyrian administrative documents in detail, it needs to be placed in context by considering the role of writing in Assyria in general. A few centuries before Aššur-uballit claimed equality with the pharaoh and probably wrested the territory around Nuzi from Mittanian supremacy, the city of Aššur operated the most sophis-

⁴² Borger (2003, 361) favoured 1(b), 2(b), 3(b) and so forth, but this has not caught on.

ticated merchant enterprise we can reconstruct for the entire pre-Classical world, and our evidence for this is overwhelmingly provided by the voluminous business correspondence and records preserved on cuneiform tablets unearthed in their thousands from their colony outside the walls of the city of Kaneš, under the shadow of Mt. Erciyes on the Anatolian plateau. Here were written documents serving almost exclusively the practical requirements of the trade enterprise and the families that ran it. There is the very occasional magical incantation, a tablet with regulations for administering the affairs of the colony, and a poetic legend about Sargon of Akkad, but very little else. The script and its application are strictly utilitarian: sign forms are simplified, complicated signs are avoided, a pared down syllabary of about seventy signs is employed and logograms are infrequent. The language is the Old Assyrian dialect of Aššur, not the Babylonian dialect otherwise adopted across much of north as well as south Mesopotamia. Presumably at Aššur itself the range of applications for the cuneiform script was wider, but the architectural stratum of the early second millennium lies so deep beneath later periods that Old Assyrian tablets from the capital are extremely rare. Formal royal inscriptions concerned with the architectural exploits of the kings do exist, but just two real estate conveyances from late in the Old Assyrian period are known,⁴³ although there must have been plenty more, along with the documentation through which debt and commerce were administered.

Aššur's trade with Anatolia fell victim to the general disruption which affected the whole Near East in the 17th and 16th centuries BC. The city of Aššur survives this period, but as in all "Dark Ages" there is little in the way of documentation until the political scene changes and an Assyrian king begins to expand his realm and ushers in the Middle Assyrian era. Apart from inscriptions commemorating royal building works, principally on temples,⁴⁴ the only large body of texts from before the 13th century is archive M9 in Pedersén's numbering, which comprises family legal documents predominantly from the 14th century. This largely derives from related families living in Aššur, recording their land transactions in villages in the countryside west of the city. In the tablets we can detect plenty of surviving Old Assyrian traits – such as language, vocabulary and calendar, but also innovations including notably the Middle Assyrian cuneiform ductus. Quite when this started is shrouded in the mists of the 16th to 15th centuries, but already in the 14th century we have new legal forms which no longer resemble their Old Assyrian predecessors, and scribes make considerable use of stereotyped logographic writings which were presumably also borrowed from Babylonian scribal tradition (see p. 50 footnote 15).

Administrative texts from the 14th century, and indeed from the reign of Adad-nirari I at the beginning of the 13th century, are few and far between. It is only really with the reign of Shalmaneser I that both at Aššur and in the provincial centres we have the sudden flood of archival texts which form the basis of this book. Yet it is important to be aware that writing did not only serve the administrative needs of the government. From stratigraphically first-

⁴³ See Gelb & Sollberger 1957.

⁴⁴ For which see comprehensively the Toronto series edited by A. K. Grayson: *Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia, Assyrian Periods*, Volumes 1–2.

millennium contexts in and around the south-western courtyard of the Aššur Temple excavators recovered a significant body of broadly “literary” texts, on tablets written in Middle Assyrian times, mostly though not exclusively in Babylonian dialect.⁴⁵ These include magical, medical and omen texts which could be seen as utilitarian in the sense that they may have formed part of the professional equipment of exorcists, doctors and diviners – all of whom feature in the everyday administrative documentation.⁴⁶ The main body of these texts found at Aššur was once characterised as “Tiglath-pileser’s library”,⁴⁷ although that attribution is now doubted, whichever of the major public buildings they originated from they must in some way reflect the library resources of the monarchy.

Among these “library texts”, presumably from the same general provenance, was a variety of other written resources, composed in native Assyrian dialect. These include:

- instructions for the training of horses,⁴⁸ not identical to but strongly reminiscent of the more famous Hittite horse-training text attributed to “Kikkuli, the Mittanian”. The colophon of two of the tablets (Ebeling’s texts A, p. 11 VAT 10450, and Ac, p. 16 Assur Photo 5865) acknowledges a horse trainer (*susānu*), and may have stated that they were copied from a writing-board (*lē’u*).⁴⁹
- recipes for the preparation of scented oils, two of them attributed to a female perfumer (*muraqqītu*) – Tapputi-Belat-ekalli and [...]ninu (see Pedersén 1985, 33).⁵⁰
- the Middle Assyrian laws: one large, relatively well-preserved tablet (Tablet A, Figure 3.2) dealing with family law, especially in relation to women, another (Tablet B) badly broken, dealing with real estate law, and several smaller fragments.⁵¹
- a variety of royal edicts (*riksāni*), some of which, from successive kings, were gathered into a series and which dictate proper behaviour in the royal court and in the harem, both within the four walls of the palace and when travelling across country.⁵² The collection dates to Tiglath-pileser I (1114–1076) at the earliest,⁵³ but the inclusion of edicts from the

⁴⁵ One exception being the Assyrian dialect version of the “Descent of Ishtar”.

⁴⁶ For a doctor (*asu’u*) called Sin-mušabši cf. MARV 4.107:24; 8.1:20, and for one called Sin-mušallim see Jakob 2003, 535–7. Exorcists were certainly active at the Assyrian court in the mid 12th century – see p. 191. For diviners (*bārī’u*) mentioned in the colophons of some of these tablets see Pedersén 1985, 33; they also feature as recipients of rations in 13th-century state administrative texts (Jakob 2003, 522–7).

⁴⁷ As defined by Weidner 1952–3; for doubts on the appropriateness of this designation see Lambert 1976, 85–6. For details of all tablets known from this source, see Pedersén 1985, 31–42.

⁴⁸ Ebeling 1951 (Pedersén 1985, 33, 37).

⁴⁹ VAT 10450 was found in square fC5III in the region of the Old Palace (see Pedersén 1985, 38 no. 3); Photo Ass. 5865 (in Istanbul numbered A608) from “Town area” (see Pedersén 1985, 40 no. 46). The writing-board is mentioned in fragment Ab rev. 3 (Ebeling 1951, 13) and probably fragment A rev. 6.

⁵⁰ Ebeling 1950. VAT 8659 = Pedersén no. 21 (Ebeling 1950, 45; from eA5V, next to western corner of the Anu-Adad temple) and no. N1.34 = VAT 10165 = KAR 220, dated to the eponymate of Šunu-qardu [=Röllig year 28, about fourth year of Tukulti-Ninurta] (Ebeling 1950, 31; from hD3V, north corner of Aššur Temple courtyard).

⁵¹ See Roth 1995, 153–94 for a recent English translation. Tablet A (VAT 10000), written in the reign of Ninurta-apil-Ekur in the early 12th century (eponym Saggiu), was found in square eE5IV, by the gate between the Old Palace and the Anu-Adad Temple (Pedersén 1985, M2.17); Tablet B (VAT 10001) was found in square eA6II on the south-west side of the Anu-Adad Temple.

⁵² Edited by Weidner as “Hof- und Haremserlässe” (Weidner 1954–6); English translation in Roth 1995, 195–209.

⁵³ On the date of the eponym Sin-apla-iddina, in whose year VAT 9629 was probably written, see Freydank 1991d, 89 (either Tiglath-pileser or Aššur-bel-kala). VAT 9614 was found in the middle of an Aššur Temple courtyard in hE4I.

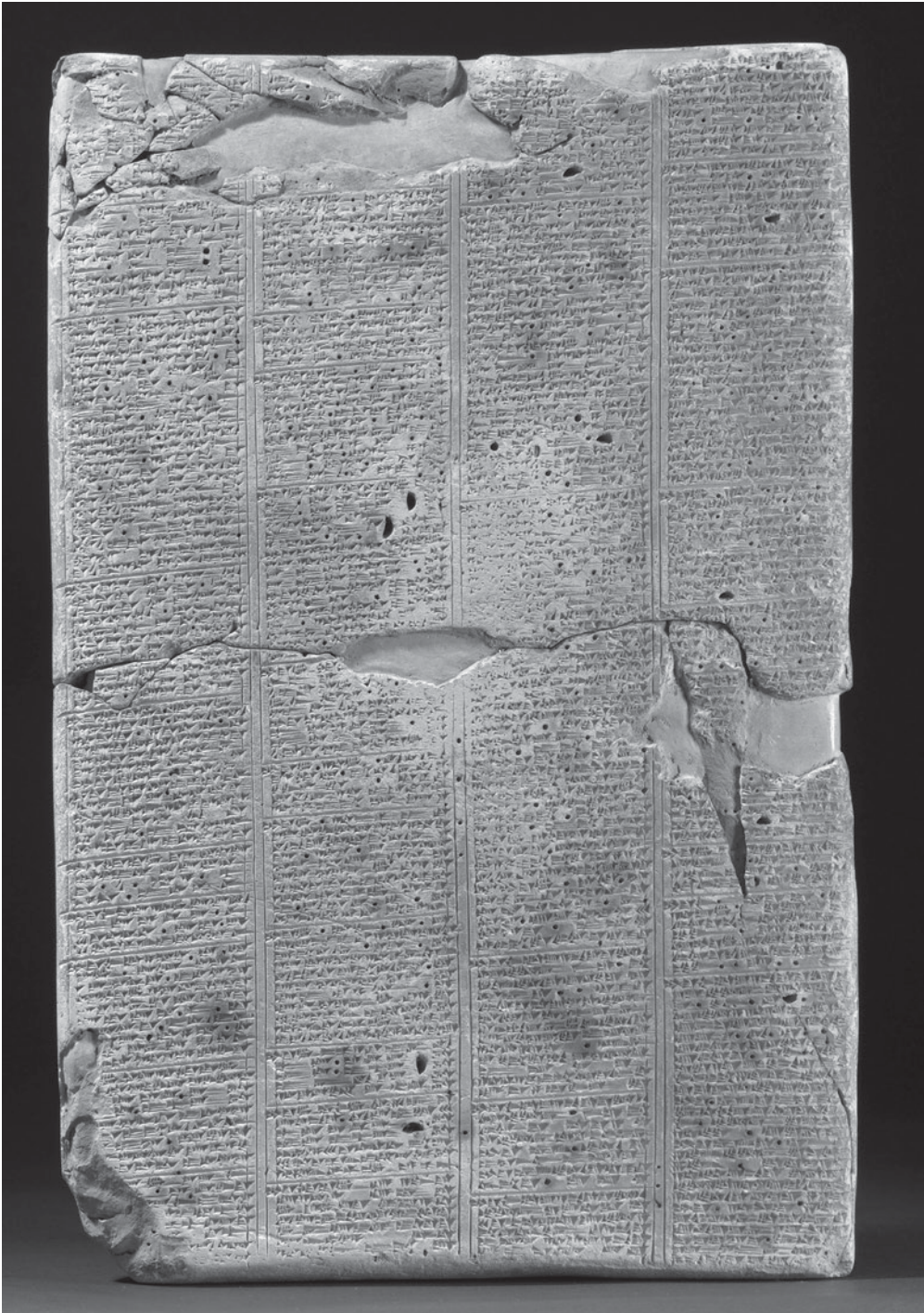


Figure 3.2. Tablet A of the Middle Assyrian Laws (VAT 10,000). © bpk / Vorderasiatisches Museum, SMB / Olaf M.Teßmer.

14th-century kings Aššur-uballiṭ and Enlil-nirari demonstrates that such documents had been preserved for later reference over a period of some two to three centuries. A broken concluding section probably prescribed that the edicts should be read out at regular intervals.⁵⁴

- fragments of annual chronicles.⁵⁵ These are at least partly written in Assyrian dialect⁵⁶ (unlike the royal inscriptions, which are written in a form of Babylonian), and are ruled into annual sections. All sections include reports on military events, but in Fragments 2 and 4 each section is introduced by a comment on the economic conditions. In Fragment 2 (reign of Arik-den-ili, 1317–1306), this takes the form of the price of grain; in one year “grain was fixed at 1 mina” (l. 18),⁵⁷ but in the following year, a “year of hardship” (MU. KALAG.GA), “at 2 minas” (l. 27). Fragment 4 points to even more severe economic distress in the reign of Tiglath-pileser (1114–1076), with Assyrians “eating one another’s flesh” (l. 2), introducing a year in which they took refuge from Aramaean incursions in the mountains of Ḫabriuri (modern Herir, east of Arbail): in the following year “the harvest of the entire land of Aššur [was flood]ed”, and details are given of Assyrian territories, including the province of Nineveh, occupied by the Aramaeans.⁵⁸ These scraps of chronicle are tantalising out of proportion to their size, since they must be the remnants of at least two centuries of annual records maintained by Assyrian scribes in their vernacular dialect, to preserve factual information of a kind we do not find in the self-glorifying texts composed in Babylonian dialect to commemorate royal building projects.

Taken together, these reference works compiled by the Assyrian scribes are clear evidence that the governing elite at Aššur was concerned over a period of two centuries and more to set down in writing informative and instructive texts, and the fact that these were in Assyrian dialect is a clear indication that they were generated in Assyria for use in Assyria, not borrowed from Babylonia like most scientific, religious and literary texts.⁵⁹ This does not, however, imply that all were necessarily first conceived at Aššur. They are very varied, but in the case of the horse-training texts and the palace edicts it is no coincidence that similar compilations are known from the Hittite capital at Ḫattusa. They are by no means duplicates, but the mere fact that in both capital cities scribes were setting down on clay instructions on identical topics is a telling comment on the shared culture of the Late Bronze Age world. Although there are no close parallels to the perfume recipe texts elsewhere, it is again no

⁵⁴ See the comment of Roth 1995, 196, comparing a better-preserved provision in a Nuzi edict.

⁵⁵ Grayson 1975, 184–9. Only one of these fragments has a published provenance, Fragment 4 from the south-west courtyard of the Aššur Temple (Pedersén 1986, II, p. 20 Archive N1:21).

⁵⁶ E.g. *iš-ši-kín* (Frag. 2:18), *in-na-bi-du* (Frag. 3 iv.17), *a-ḫa-iš* (Frag. 4.2), *iš-bu-tu* (Frag. 4:4).

⁵⁷ 1 MA.NA.TA.ĀM ŠE *iššikin*.

⁵⁸ l. 10: [...] BURU₁₄ KUR *ḏa-šur ka-li-š[u ra-ḫi]-i-š*. Grayson’s restoration here is now supported by the occurrence of the same verb in administrative texts from Durkatlimmu, for example Röhlig 2008, No. 67:12.

⁵⁹ Unfortunately, the majority of the tablets are either undated or damaged where the date might have been, so that some of these text groups cannot be confidently dated. The provenance of the texts is also unhelpful in deciding what their social context might have been – were they all preserved in departments of the palace, or in elite private households, or in the premises of specialists, such as horse trainers, perfumers or lawyers? These questions can only be asked at present, not answered.

coincidence that one of the recurrent topics of Mycenaean archives is the production of perfumed oils,⁶⁰ and it is unlikely that it was only in Assyria that these skills were committed to writing, even if authorship of the texts we have is attributed to named suppliers of the Assyrian court. Finally, it may be worth suggesting that the very fragmentary chronicles are evidence of a desire to create an unbiased record of historical events, a mindset which we do not usually look for in the Assyrian royal annals, but is easier to detect behind historical narratives in the Hittite sources, including for instance the historical preambles with which the Hittite kings were wont to introduce their international treaties.

The example of the Assyrian chronicles may also serve as a useful reminder of the patchy nature of our sources. We have some laws, but with one exception only small fragments from several large tablets, and a variety of legal and commercial transactions but no definitive land sale documents. We lack examples of texts which must surely have existed (and very likely still await discovery at Qal'at Sherqat): not only do we have no contemporary eponym lists, but we have not a single international treaty from Assyria to match with those plentifully attested at Ugarit and Hattusa, and although we have a fascinating body of correspondence from the administration of Babu-aḫa-iddina's household, other letters are scarce, so that for examples of the diplomatic correspondence of the Assyrian kings we are dependent on the finds at Hattusa and in Egypt at El-Amarna.

Writing in the Private Sector

The great majority of the state (and other) archives here considered date from the second period of territorial expansion under the three major 13th-century kings, and down into the early 11th century. As has already been mentioned, the earliest substantial body of Middle Assyrian documents comes from the archives of urban families at Aššur in the 14th century. They are mainly to do with loans secured by pledge of real estate, but also include trade contracts and matters of family law,⁶¹ but although private sector documents are now far outnumbered by state administrative archives, it is certain that written documents were widely embedded in social and economic relationships across society in general. That we do not have more is a function of where archaeologists have chosen to dig. The role of documents in the procedures for land sale is made clear by Tablet B of the Laws, and in §§17–18 we read that a dissatisfied farmer could secure a written order from judges to authorise his use of water resources, while Tablet C §11 also refers to written instruments in a commercial context. One of the most unusual documents we have, witnessed by the gods Sin, Šamaš, Ištar and Gula, is written on the model of a leg, and is intended to safeguard a slave woman's right to be known as the mother of a foundling she had rescued from the river and brought up (Figure 3.3).⁶²

⁶⁰ See Fappas 2010.

⁶¹ The texts are edited in Saporetti 1979b; 1982. One of the documents, KAJ 39, is a silver advance for a trading mission to Sutan territory (see Monroe 2009, 117–19 and Faist 2001, 156ff. for this and related texts).

⁶² Franke & Wilhelm 1985.



Figure 3.3. Clay model leg with Middle Assyrian inscription. © Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe, Hamburg.

While this may not be technically a legal instrument (after all it is not sealed), it is testimony to the value that could be attached to committing something to writing. An idea of the range of documents a family might store away over the years is given by KAJ 310 from the household of Urad-Šerua, a text which has been cited more than once to illustrate a variety of circumstances in which writing could be employed (see Chapter 4.5). More recently a general statement of the possible types of document has been published in tablet VAT 20328, probably from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, which recorded a decree of Tukulti-Ninurta, the king:⁶³ in recognition of the loyal service given to him by (the presumably recently deceased) Aššur-tišamme, the king has undertaken as an act of generosity (*kī rīmutte*) to pay off his debts, which would otherwise be met by his son Aššur-nadin-apli. The herald's announcement will invite any creditors (*ummiānātu*) to present themselves with their documentary evidence within 7 days (the tablet is dated to the 22nd and the deadline is the 29th of the month of Ša-sarrate, eponymate of Ili-pada) to have their debts refunded by the monarch, and any who fails to do so “will forfeit his debts, (and) his formally-executed tablets are void and due to be broken.”⁶⁴ We are clearly in the private commercial sector, and earlier in the text of the edict, there is a list of twenty-two possible categories of goods in which the debts may have

⁶³ For preliminary comment on this text, see Freydank 1997c, which is chiefly concerned with establishing the meaning of *bitqa batāqu*. From this text, and from three separate letters addressed to Ubru (MARV 1.13; KAV 169; MARV 5.88), it is clear that the action of “deducting a deduction” is a legal procedure by which a creditor can recover some or all of an outstanding sum from a debtor's property.

⁶⁴ (ll. 39–41: *i+na ħu-bu-ul-li-šu qa-a[s-su] e-el-li [t]up-pa-a-tu-šu ṣa-ab-b[u-t]a-tu [na]-aḥ-r[a] a-na ħi-pi [n]a-at-ṭa*).

been incurred, ending up “[or for] anything whatsoever, from 1000 talents to 1 shekel, from much to little”. The list of goods is sadly broken and incomplete, but after the first five or six entries (ll. 12–13), which must have concerned real estate, the scribe lists stones (presumably precious), metals (gold and silver are presumably lost in l. 14 or 15), textiles and wool, oil, slaves and domestic animals. This list may well stand for the range of commercial activities in which an Assyrian family might be engaged, but at the same time, like the evidence of the Urad-Šerua storeroom inventory, it also attests to the important role the written document played in these activities.

¹¹ *tup-pa-a-te-šu*

¹² [*ša lu ša A.ŠĀ*].MEŠ *lu ša GIŠ*.¹SAR¹.MEŠ *lu ša URU*¹.ĪA

¹³ [*lu ša*] *lu ša PŪ*.[ME]Š *lu ša NA*₄

¹⁴ [*lu ša*]x.MEŠ *lu ša* ¹URUDU¹ *lu ša AN.NA*

¹⁵ [*lu ša* (..... *lu ša*)] ¹ZABAR¹ *lu ša a-ba-ri lu ša ŠE-im*

¹⁶ [*lu ša*]GIG.ĪA [()] *lu ša ḥa-áš-la-a-te*

¹⁷ [*lu ša*] *lu-bu-ul-[te lu ša]* SÍG.MEŠ *lu ša ĪA*

¹⁸ [*lu ša*] *a-i-lu-ut-t[e lu ša]* ANŠE.KUR.RA

¹⁹ [*lu š*]a ANŠE *ku-di-ni* [*lu š*]a GU₄ *lu ša ANŠE*

²⁰ [*lu*] *ša še-ni*.MEŠ [*lu ša*²] *am-mar mi-im-ma šúm-šu*¹

²¹ [()] *i]š-tu 1 lim* GŪ.UN [()] *a-di 1 GÍN*

²² [*i]š-tu ma-a-di a-di* [*e-(a-)]*ši *ú-kal-lu-u-ni*

... his tablets which he holds (l. 22)

[whether for field]s, or orchards, or villages,

[or ...], or wells, or stone(s),

[or ...]s, or copper, or tin²,

[or (... or)]bronze, or lead, or barley,

[or] wheat, or crushed grain,

[or] clothing, [or] wool, or oil,

[or] human resources, [or] horse(s),

[or] mules, [or] oxen, or donkey(s),

[or] flocks, [or] anything else,

from 1,000 talents to 1 shekel,

from much to little ...

MARV 4.151:11–22

It is clear then that the state archives with which this study is principally concerned did not exist in a vacuum. On the contrary, outside the four walls of the palace, written documents were a regular part of society, enabling the poor to borrow from the rich, merchants to carry out their trade, judges to record their decisions, land to be sold and exchanged and property to be divided among its inheritors. Given that when issuing edicts the kings themselves retained the traditional title of “overseer” (*uklu*), which they held in the centuries when the city was an overland trading hub, it is no surprise to find that in its dealings with the citizens of Aššur the palace adopted and adapted the written practices of the private sector.

The documentation and its terminology⁶⁵

Before entering on a discussion of individual archives, to place their written output in context we need to examine the nature of written documents in Middle Assyrian contexts of all kinds. This is not merely to ensure that we understand accurately the terminology we encounter, but also because a preoccupation with the precise format and formulation of documents is a familiar characteristic of a bureaucracy and can betray the preoccupations of their users. There are clear instances in our texts which show that the observance of formal procedures in documenting a transaction was deemed important. From Tell Chuera, for example, we have

⁶⁵ Insofar as it deals with document types and their terminology, this section reprises, but also updates, Postgate 1986b, and, more recently, Postgate 2003a.

detailed instructions for the proper drafting of tablets documenting an official's fulfilment of instructions from the central administration (see p. 71), while the correspondence from the organisation of Babu-aḥa-iddina's personal household shows how carefully the sealing of storerooms and consignments of goods, and the associated documentation was regulated (Chapter 4.4). Rather than applying criteria devised by ourselves for defining the apparent purpose or content of a text, it seems methodologically preferable to start from two types of categorisation inherent in the documents, and so offered us by the scribes themselves – on one hand, the technical terminology used for different kinds of documents, and, on the other hand, their physical characteristics.

lē'u “Writing-board”

Clay tablets were not the only vehicles for written documents; the administration made considerable use of wooden writing-boards (*lē'u*).⁶⁶ As far as we know the boards were not used in strictly legal contexts: perhaps they did not provide the security associated with a sealed tablet, although later at least, and in Anatolia, there is every reason to think that folding wooden writing-boards could be secured with a clay sealing.⁶⁷ In any case, these boards were certainly used by the administration for long lists, for example of personal names or issues of rations. Passages in the clay tablets occasionally refer to the wax needed to infill the boards, and to the orpiment, which we know from the analysis of the writing-boards at Nimrud in the first millennium was used to keep the wax malleable (see p. 217). Mentions of the boards themselves make it clear that these were retained for reference, and perhaps periodically updated, by the different administrative departments over a period of time. A summary account text of sheep and goatskins from the Stewards' Archive gave totals “for two years in accordance with the writing-boards of the offerings of the animal-fattener which he periodically received”.⁶⁸ A record of clothing destined for members of the army begins each section with multi-coloured garments “which are in accordance with the writing-board of PN” (*ša ki le-ī PN*),⁶⁹ again implying the existence of an archived document to which reference could be made on occasion. Probably the most important records of this kind were a series of five boards, of which one was “the king's board”; the other four were named after high officials. These were long lists of men serving in the army, and the evidence indicates that these lists remained in force for a period of at least 20 years.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ For one example of their use see the previous section on the horse-training texts.

⁶⁷ There is textual evidence at Hattusa for the sealing of wooden writing-boards (Waal 2011, 27), and it is generally assumed that many of the clay sealings from there had been attached to writing-boards (Herbordt 2005, 36–9; Herbordt et al. 2011, 25–6). For mentions of boards (wr. *li-um*) in Ur III documents, see Steinkeller 2004, 75–6; in texts from Ugarit p. 398.

⁶⁸ *ša 2 MU.MEŠ ša pi-i le-a-ni ša SISKUR.MEŠ ša ša ku-ru-ul-ti-e ša im-ta-ḥu-ru-ni*, MARV 2.19: rev.11'–12'.

⁶⁹ MAH 16086, Postgate 1979a, 3–5; for reading LI-ḪI as *lē'i* here see Freydank, MARV 3 p. 9 on text No. 5, which has the phrase *ša pi-i le-ī* in a tablet which probably comes from the same textiles office.

⁷⁰ See Postgate 2003a, 135 (citing W. Pempe); Freydank 2001.

Tuppu “(Clay) Tablet”

The ordinary word for an inscribed clay document was *tuppu* (fem.; pl. *tuppātu*),⁷¹ which we normally translate as “tablet”, and this may apply to documents of various kinds. Thus we read, of a contractual document in the private sector, “that tablet is expired” (*tuppu šīt naḥrat*), or of “a tablet of 4 minas of silver” (*tuppu ša 4 MA.NA šarpi*, MARV 4.78:44). Formally drawn up tablets constituted solid evidence of an obligation: normally retained by the creditor, they could be passed on to a third party who could use them to retrieve what was owed, so we read “Total, 3 tablets belonging to Urad-Šerua son of Melisaḥ have been given to Šilliya, the flock-master, son of Urdu, for collection. He shall collect (what is owed) (and) give (the animals) to Urad-Šerua, and (then) may break his tablet”.⁷² *Tuppu* can also apply to a letter: referring to his own letter, Babu-aḥa-iddina instructs his subordinates to “read (this) tablet in front of him, and put in place witnesses to his statement”.⁷³ Also referring to a letter is MARV 8.84 “Give 5 bales³ of straw³ to the man who is bringing my tablet to you. Keep my tablet”.⁷⁴ This particular letter was preserved together with its envelope, which is sealed all over and bears the address: “Tablet of Sin-šuma-ušur, to Aššur-le’i (of/at) the town of Abiti”. The word *tablet* is here written DUB.BI, which we transcribe *tup-pí*, and this archaic writing is typical of other instances where the contents of an envelope are indicated in this way: not only with other letters, as for example at Durkatlimmu, but also with administrative texts encased in envelopes such as MARV 1.73, from the Offerings Archive, and Nos. 9, 20, 21 and 22 at Tell Ali (Ismail & Postgate 2008). Rather than implying that *tuppi* refers to the envelope itself, it seems more likely that the intended meaning is “(contained within this envelope is) a tablet of Sin-šuma-ušur ... etc.”⁷⁵

Two formal categories of tablet are the “valid tablet” (*tuppu dannutu*), which belongs in the sphere of law, and the “formally executed tablet” (*tuppu šabittu*), which is found in both legal and administrative contexts. After discussing these, we need to look at two other terms for written documents, *kaniku* and *kiširtu*. These will lead us to examine the practice of sealing and the use of envelopes.

Tuppu dannutu “Valid Tablet”

The precise original force of the word *dannu* is unclear, but the English *valid* (whose Latin origin means “strong”) gives some of the correct nuance, as the phrase *adi tuppa dannata ana pāni šarri išaṭṭurūni annītu-ma dannat* (“until they write the valid tablet on behalf of

⁷¹ In view of the reasons set out in CAD T 148b, I have broken ranks with the consensus which writes *tuppu* and *tupšarru*, in favour of reverting to *tuppu* and *tupšarru*.

⁷² Edition: Postgate 1988a, No. 38.

⁷³ *tuppa ana pānišu sisiā ū šēbūte ana pišu šuknā*, MARV 3.64:10–12.

⁷⁴ 5 *gipše ša IN.NA ana LÚ ša tuppi naššakkūni din. tuppi ušur*, MARV 8.84:6–11. IN.NA is presumably to be added to the varied dossier of logograms for *tibnu* (CAD T 380b); this usage of *gipšu* is not previously attested and the translation is no more than a guess.

⁷⁵ For the typology of Middle Assyrian letters see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996; and for a comprehensive survey of Middle Assyrian correspondence from all provenances see Llop 2012b.

the king, this one is valid”) clearly demonstrates.⁷⁶ This usage goes right back to the (later) Old Assyrian period, and whatever its initial meaning, in practice it refers to a document which has legal validity, and is applied to the definitive purchase document for a piece of land. The real estate transactions in the 14th-century family archive (Pedersen’s M9) make it clear that the “valid document” was explicitly contrasted to less formal documents concerned with the same sale, which acted as provisional documentation for a purchase which was passing through a series of legally prescribed procedures. These are summed up in the phrase *eqla uzakka ina ašal šarri imaddad ū tuppa dannata ana pāni šarri išaṭṭar* (with variants) “he will clear the field (of claims), he will measure it with the royal rope, and will write the valid tablet on behalf of the king”.⁷⁷ Some of what “clearing” the field of claims involved is apparent from the Middle Assyrian law code, including arranging for the herald to proclaim the intended sale and invite any rival claimants to the property to present their case. In Neo-Assyrian times, the term was abbreviated to *dannutu* and was applied to all conveyances, for persons as well as real estate, of which we have plenty of examples, as well as to royal deeds of donation.⁷⁸ Unfortunately, from Middle Assyrian Aššur no certain *tuppu dannutu* has come down to us: the sale documents from the M9 archive are no more than interim documents which may include the provision that the intending purchaser should “choose and take” (*inassaq ilaqqe*) his land, and tend to conclude with the phrase quoted earlier, making it clear that they are not themselves the “valid tablet”.⁷⁹ However, there is a good chance that BM123367, a tablet excavated at Nineveh, was a *tuppu dannutu*, and it is illustrated here as Figure 3.4.⁸⁰

Tuppu šabittu “Formally Executed Tablet”

This technical term is difficult to translate, but it is approximately equivalent to a “formally executed” or effectively a “sealed tablet”. It belongs with the verbal phrase *tuppa šabātu* “to formally execute (literally: seize) a tablet” which is in use in both Middle Assyrian and Neo-Assyrian texts. Unfortunately there is no unanimity among modern scholars as to its meaning, but I have tried to demonstrate that in Middle Assyrian contexts at least the *tuppu šabittu* (with its plural *tuppātu šabbutātu*) is a class of document, the essential nature of which is that it has been sealed by the party to the transaction who is thereby admitting to a liability. As such, it may apply to an adoption contract (attested in the Middle Assyrian tablet from El-Qiṭar in Syria), or to loans or other bilateral contracts, whether in the private sector

⁷⁶ My reservations about translating *valid* in Postgate 1986b, 17 are perhaps overdone.

⁷⁷ See Postgate 1971, 514–16; KAJ 14 cited p. 32.

⁷⁸ The technical meaning of *dannutu* has occasionally been doubted, but I hope to have dispelled these doubts recently (Postgate 2011b, 155).

⁷⁹ On such land conveyances see, pp. 32–5.

⁸⁰ This carefully formed and written tablet (photo and edition Postgate 1973a, Pl. XV, copy in Millard 1970, Pl. XXXVI) with a fine seal impression on the top of the obverse and the top edge, was mentioned as a possible candidate for a *tuppu dannutu* in Postgate 1971, 516, but because little more than the witnesses and date are preserved, it must remain uncertain. [Note that the *limmu* name should be read *'bu-na-nu* as indicated by Freydank 1991d, 130 and confirmed by the photo. Freydank assigns this eponym to Aššur-dan (1178–1133).]



Figure 3.4. Sealed land-sale tablet from Nineveh (BM123367, Obverse and Reverse). © The Trustees of the British Museum.

or within a state administrative organisation.⁸¹ Thus when King Tukulti-Ninurta offers to pay off Aššur-tišamme's debts, he decrees that any creditor of his who fails to present his tablets to the palace "will forfeit his debts, his formally executed tablets are void and due to be broken".⁸² This belongs in the sphere of private commerce, but the same term is not uncommon in administrative contexts, such as MARV 2.6, a long list of families and their possessions, where we read that three officials "have checked (it) in accordance with the formally executed tablet of the Tablet House".⁸³ A clear distinction is drawn in other cases between transactions duly recorded on formally executed tablets, and similar transactions which for some reason are not yet so documented: "85.45 homers (of grain) – Ekur-rešussu in accordance with his formally executed tablet (*ša pi-i tup-pi-šu ša-bi-it-te*), 33.4 homers – Ekur-rešussu – his tablet has not been formally executed (*tup-pu-šu la ša-ab-ta-at*)" (MARV 1.1.7–9 and similar passages in the same column).

Našpertu "Directive"

In 1986, on the basis of two tablets from Tell Billa and two from Aššur, it was suggested that the term *našpertu*, very common in the Old Assyrian mercantile archives, refers in Middle Assyrian times to a "message tablet" used to convey formal authorisation for a transaction, for which the nearest English equivalent may be a "directive". So for instance 2,000 arrows were issued "at the royal command, in accordance with a directive (*ana pî našperte*) of Samnuḥa-ašared, the steward" (MARV 1.72; see p. 159). Since then, further instances of the word confirm beyond doubt that (unlike *šipirtu*) it does refer to an inscribed tablet – for

⁸¹ See Postgate 2011b, 149–52 and note the preterite D stem form *uṣabbitūni* equivalent to the adjective *ṣabbutu* in KAV 217 (Freydank 1992b).

⁸² *ina ḥubullišu qa[ssu] e'elli [t]uppātušu ṣabb[ut]ātu [n]aḥr[ā] ana ḥīpi [n]aṭṭā*, MARV 4.151:40–1 cited, p. 62.

⁸³ *ana pî tup-pi ṣaḫ-bi-te ša É tuppâte ētašrū* MARV 2.6 rev. vi.90"–91". For another instance in the context of a private household, compare Babu-aḥa-iddina's instruction to his staff in KAV 102, 17–20: *tuppušu ṣabtā. tuppa ša taṣabbatāni Mušallim-Aššur li[lqe] ana muḥḥiya lubl[a]*.

example “you have written it in your directive and sent it to me”,⁸⁴ and the suspicion that it would have been sealed and enclosed in an envelope is confirmed by a letter from the king found at Durkatlimmu in which he writes “I have sent a directive to Adaya, (and) I have sealed the envelope and the tablet with my seals.”⁸⁵ In her discussion of this passage and the occurrences in two other Durkatlimmu letters, Cancik-Kirschbaum concludes that the term appears to refer in specific cases to a document in letter form, which carries a seal impression on the tablet.⁸⁶ As examples of this type of instrument she refers to a group of letters from Tell Chuera which are now published as Jakob 2009, Nos. 22–8: they are in fact sealed on both tablet and envelope, and, like MARV 1.39, they have a formal date at the end of the text. They are sent to several provincial governors and contain instructions to issue supplies to travelling diplomatic convoys as they pass through the different cities including Ḫarbu (Tell Chuera) itself. Although in each letter the document itself is referred to as “my tablet” (*tup-pi*), it seems extremely probable that these are also “directives” (*našpertu*), and another Tell Chuera letter can illustrate the role of such documents in the administration:

²⁰ *a-na* UGU ¹*ma-nu-ki-ia*
na-áš-pér-ta ul-te-bi-il
šúm-ma ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ ù GIŠ.GIGIR.MEŠ
la-a it-ta-na-ku ANŠE.KUR.RA su-ḫi-ri
ta-ku-un-na ša i+na pi-it-[ti]
²⁵ ¹*áš-tu-i e-ku-lu-ú-ni*
ša dan-nu-te ša lib-bi-šu-nu
^{1d}*IM-ba-ri-iḫ li-ir-[ku-us]*

... To Mannu-kiya
 I have sent a directive.
 If he does not issue to you horses
 and chariots, let Adad-bariḫ har[ness]
 ... colts,⁸⁷
 which are being fed under Aštui,
 from the strongest ones among them.

Jakob 2009, No.11:20–7

Plainly the author of the letter has sent a directive telling Mannu-kiya to issue Sutiū the horses and chariots he needs, but is not confident this will actually happen, so he gives a back-up plan. In line with this we may sum up the *našpertu* as a directive giving instructions or authorisation for a transaction, which was formulated as a letter addressed to the person charged with carrying out the instructions, dated like an administrative or legal document and sealed on both the tablet and the envelope.⁸⁸ Unlike less formal letters, the examples from Tell Chuera at least bear the entire text on the envelope as well as the tablet. This description is probably also valid for the *našpertu* mentioned in MARV 5.86, which belongs with a group of formal letters from the Archive of Ubrū concerned with legal proceedings:⁸⁹ “I sent you

⁸⁴ *ina na[š]perti-ka taltatar tultēbila* MARV 4.8:4; cf. MARV 5.86:8 *našperti ultēbilakku*.

⁸⁵ *na-áš-pér-ta a-na* UGU ¹*a-da-ia al-t[a-par]* ⁵ *ma-ak-na-ak-ta ù tup-pa* NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-*ia* ⁶ *ak-ta-na-ak* (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996 No. 9:4–6; *našpertu* also in Nos. 12 and 13).

⁸⁶ As suggested in Postgate 1986b, 26 citing MARV 1.39, a directive from Babu-aḫa-iddina (but not found with his own archives) to the governor of Amasaki, sealed and dated at the end like an administrative or legal text.

⁸⁷ *Ta-ku-un-na* here can hardly be from D *kuānu* (pace Jakob), nor is a second person indicative form expected in the context. I suspect this is a Hurrian term (note the other Hurrian loans into Akkadian *takulathu*, *takurassu*, *takušu*, CAD T 89–91).

⁸⁸ For other occurrences see also MARV 4.17:6; 4.49:4 and 7.3:8.

⁸⁹ These are the “gerichtliche Ladungen” grouped as Nos. 133–9 in Llop-Radua 2009.

my directive, why did you not come?”⁹⁰ One such “directive” sent to Ubru is probably MARV 1.13, which is indeed sealed, and dated formally at the end in the same way.

Nikkassu “Account(s)”

From their content, some texts can be reasonably described in English as accounts, and the Assyrian term *nikkassu*, usually written NÍG.KA₉(.MEŠ), would certainly have been applied to some of these. A sealed envelope receipt probably from Aššur, though deriving from the antiquities trade and so unprovenanced, reports that two shekels of gold are “deposited in Abdu’s own accounts-chest” (*ina quppi ša NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ ‘Abdi-ma šakin*).⁹¹ One may “do” (*epāšu*) accounts,⁹² but the more frequent technical term is *nikkassē šabātu*, which is here usually translated “to draw up the accounts”. This would certainly have involved calculating totals – by “adding” (*kamāru*) – and sometimes balancing income against expenditure – often revealing a “deficit” (*muṭṭā’u*) – and was normally an internal activity of an organisation or enterprise. At Tell Chuera the beer received by the mayor from a brewer is said to have been “all calculated (and) placed in the accounts” (*gabbu uppuš ana NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ šakin*).⁹³ A satisfactorily completed account may be called a *nikkassu šalmu* (Röllig 2008, 15). Presumably in most instances the accounts were prepared by the scribes who had generated and preserved the individual tablets recording receipts and disbursements, but in one account tablet from the Stewards’ Archive there is at least a hint that external accountants might be involved in the process, making it more like an audit: the recipient of a large consignment of cedar is required to “burn it entirely, and they will draw up his accounts, and he may then break his tablet” (MARV 1.23 see p. 162 No. 15). It was quite usual for an official’s receipt of a consignment of commodities to be conditional on his drawing up accounts as evidence of how they were disbursed: thus in MARV 8.21.20–3 the recipients of a quantity of grain “will have it consumed (as rations), he will draw up his accounts, and they may then break their tablet”.⁹⁴ These examples are from Aššur; in the provinces too accounts were expected: at Durkatlimmu the high-ranking Aššur-iddin instructs his correspondent that he is to issue 40 homers of the palace’s grain to a man as a gift from the king, and “you will write it down and put it under your authority, and you will include it in the accounts”.⁹⁵ Similar provisions are imposed at Šibaniba for the provision of palace grain for a feast: “he will have it consumed, draw up the accounts, and then may break his tablet”.⁹⁶

⁹⁰ *na-áš-pe-er-ti ul-te-bi-la-ak-ku a-na-i-ni la ta-li-ka* MARV 5.86 (=KAV 169):8–11.

⁹¹ Van Driel & Jas 1989, 63 (cited in Wiggermann 2000, 176).

⁹² E.g. MARV 5.7:19–20.

⁹³ Jakob 2009, No. 53:12–13.

⁹⁴ The change of subject here is probably deliberate, but it is difficult for us to be sure who was responsible for the accounts.

⁹⁵ *at-ta šu-tu-ur i+na pi-i-tu-uk-ka šu-ku-un a-na* NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ *tu-qar-ra-ab* (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 1:16–19).

⁹⁶ Billa Nos. 7–8; cf. also TR 2045 from Tell al-Rimah (“he will draw up his accounts, and they may break their tablets”), or the merchants’ contract mentioned later (No. 1 in the Stewards’ Archive p. 151).

Different accounts were kept by different sectors of the administration, for example “the accounts of the flour-processers”,⁹⁷ or for different commodities, for example “the aromatics accounts”,⁹⁸ or in a note dealing with 4 years of grain accounts the remark “The accounts of honey, sesame and fruit were not drawn up”.⁹⁹ MARV 1.49 refers to one account drawn up specifically for “925.03 homers of grain of the payments of the Assyrians” for which Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer, was responsible. A completed account could simply be to establish the facts, but the end result could often be to establish the liability of a member of the organisation. So in another text from the Offerings Archive we read that “103.9 homers of grain was imposed on Aššur-abuk-aḥḥe at the drawing up of the accounts”.¹⁰⁰ The drawing up of accounts was often the trigger to generate fresh documents stating liabilities: naturally most accounts were drawn up to cover a delimited time period, thus a note of barley debts can begin “After their accounts have been drawn up for (the period) up to the month of Muhur-ilani, 5th day, eponymate of Ninurta-našir”.¹⁰¹ Some accounts were prepared annually: this is very clear in both the stock-breeding and the agricultural records from Durkatlimmu (Chapter 5), and in phrases like “sesame ... of the Lower Province, which at the reading was written into the deficits of the eponymate of Aššur-nirari (*ša i-na sa-su-u-e a-na mu-uṭ-ṭa-e ša li-me PN šaṭ-ru-ú-ni*), has been written into the eponymate of Salmanu-aḥa-iddina” (MARV 1.56:53–4). That the annual statements were retained for future reference is also evident from texts like KAJ 240 where the scribe refers to skins “of the accounts of the eponymate of” three different eponyms, or the tablet from Durkatlimmu labelled on the edge: “Account of three years (of animals) in the charge of Tukulti-Adad, the donkey-herd of the palace”.¹⁰² As has frequently been noted, and as is particularly clear in the Durkatlimmu archive, the end of the Middle Assyrian scribes’ financial year seems to have been on the 20th day of the month Ḫibur.

Kiširtu “Case-Tablet”

While the majority of legally recognised transactions were recorded on single tablets and authenticated by the seals of both the consenting party and any witnesses, there is another class of document which like the *našpertu* directives would be encased in envelopes. These are usually receipts – that is documents drawn up to acknowledge the receipt of a commodity. This was already clear on the basis of a smaller corpus which included texts from Aššur and Tell al-Rimah (Postgate 1986b, 13–16). The earliest example is KAV 207 (with its inner tablet KAJ 233) probably of 14th-century date.¹⁰³ Practice in the 13th century is now best illustrated by the receipt texts with the key word *maḥīr* “he has received” from the flock-

⁹⁷ E.g. NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ-šu-nu *ša a-láḫ-ḫi-ni*^{mes} MARV 5.13:1–2.

⁹⁸ NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ *ša* ŠIM.MEŠ MARV 8.69:2.

⁹⁹ NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ *ša* LÁL.MEŠ ŠE.GIŠ.IÀ.MEŠ *ù a-za-am-ri*^{mes} *la-a šab-tu* MARV 6.22:13’.

¹⁰⁰ *i+na ša-bat* NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ *i+na* UGU PN *it-ta-áš-ka-an*, MARV 6.22:9’-11’.

¹⁰¹ MARV 6.25:5; cf. Postgate 1986b, 36 referring to similar phrases in KAJ 80; 107; 120; 307; and MARV 1.49.

¹⁰² NÍG.KA₉ ša 3 MU.MEŠ *ša* ŠU PN ... Rölli 2008, No. 53:53–4.

¹⁰³ This text belongs to the predominantly 14th-century assemblage Ass. 14446 (seal drawing Beran 1957, 155–6).

master's archive at Tell Ali, which were probably all tablets inside a sealed envelope bearing a near-duplicate text, but introduced by the word *tuppi* (written DUB-BI, see p. 65),¹⁰⁴ a habit which is also met at Nuzi. Enclosing receipts in envelopes is the converse of Neo-Assyrian practice in which a receipt, like other “final” documents such as land or slave conveyances, would normally be on a single tablet, whereas contracts documenting an ongoing liability were regularly encased in envelopes.

Further examples reinforce the conclusion that the Middle Assyrian term for a tablet in an envelope, or to use the long-standing Assyriological term *case-tablet*, is *kiširtu*.¹⁰⁵ There are several *kiširtu* in the Offerings Archive, but most revealing are passages in the administrative directives from Tell Chuera. The instructions to the local governors to issue supplies to visiting dignitaries conclude with the words: *tuppī tūbala ana kunukki ša kišrāte tutār. šumma adi uraḥi ūmāte la tattabal la tutta'ēr la ikaššurūnikku*. This is difficult to translate literally, but my understanding of the passage runs: “You will bring my tablet, (and) convert (it) into a sealed case-tablet. If within one month you have not brought (and) converted (it), they will not encase (it) for you”.¹⁰⁶ Although the precise implication of *ana kunukki ša kišrāte* (literally “into the seal of the *kiširtu* documents”) remains hard to determine, there can be no doubt that the author of the letter is instructing his correspondent to have a *kiširtu* drawn up which will provide proof that he had issued the commodities requested on his superior's instructions, and which he would retain to absolve him for liability for those commodities. To make sense of such contexts I have in places translated the verb *kašāru* as “to ratify”,¹⁰⁷ although borrowing other English terms, one might also try *endorse* or *certify*, but it must also retain its literal meaning of “to bind”, referring to the action of encasing the tablet. What remains to be worked out is who, and indeed where, “they” are: not the actual recipients of the supplies – since they will long since have passed through the town – but a third party constituted by other officials, who by impressing their seals will provide confirmation that the issues were indeed made. We have a similar situation in Chuera No. 83, a delivery contract which says, “they will deliver (the sesame) where they tell them, they will draw up a case-tablet and then may break their tablet”.¹⁰⁸ The point being, that they CAN'T break the tablet because it is somewhere else, viz in the tablet cupboards of the governor back at Tell Chuera, so that

¹⁰⁴ Compare also MARV 1.73 (envelope begins DUB-BI); the case tablet recording receipt of two shekels of gold (van Driel & Jas 1989); the unopened envelope TR 2039 ([DU]B-BI 12 ½ MA.NA AN.NA) from Tell al-Rimah; an example on an envelope from T abete on the middle Ḥabur (Shibata 2012, 495); and the Sabi Abyad envelope T96–23 inscribed: *tup-pu. ša ū-nu-te š[a š]u-ub-re-e^{uru}ša-di-ka-n[a-i]e-e* “Tablet: of the equipment of the Šubrians of the town of Šadikanni” (Wiggermann 2000, 207 drawing p. 220). DUB-BI is also used on the envelopes enclosing letters, cf. *tup-pi* LUGAL “Tablet of the king” or *tup-pi* PN (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996 Taf. 25–6 from Durkatlimmu).

¹⁰⁵ Postgate 2003a, 131–2; Jakob 2009, 60. For the word itself see MARV 1.43; 1.49; 3.36+84; 5.7; 5.42; 6.15; 6.24; 6.67; and outside the Offerings Archive Jakob 2009, Nos. 22–6 and 83; Postgate 1988 No. 37 (KAJ 311); 50 (=KAJ 310); KAJ 241. For the verb see MARV 1.73; 5.42; 6.81; 6.90; 7.3; 10.1; Donbaz 1976, 15–16, Pl. 1 (all *ik-ta-šar*); MARV 4.135; 8.72 (both *i-ka-ša-ar*); KAJ 300:9 and MARV 1.10:19 are uncertain.

¹⁰⁶ Similar to this phrase is MARV 4.40:14–16 *tup-pi tu-ba-al a-na KIŠIB 1aš-šur-i-din SUKKAL tu-ta-ar*, which I would understand as: “You will take my tablet, (and) convert (it) into a seal(ed document) of Aššur-iddin, the vizier”.

¹⁰⁷ The term *ratify* is defined as “to approve and sanction, esp. by signature” (*The Chambers Dictionary* (1994), 1430).

¹⁰⁸ *ašar iqabbiūnišununi iddunū kiširta išabbutūni tuppūšunu iḥappi'ū*. Compare MARV 8.72.5'–8': [*i-n*]a NA₄KIŠIB SUKKAL *i-ka-ša-ar id-dan ū tup-pu-šu i-ḥap-pi*, and a similar phrase in MARV 4.135.

until they get home the confirmation of the delivery has to be provided by a third party (and since the tablet in question was recovered by 20th-century archaeologists, perhaps they never did return with their ratified case-tablet). What these two situations share is that in each case neither the original debt-note is physically present to be broken, nor is the original “creditor” present to issue a receipt. Hence the need for a neutral third party.

One tablet with envelope from the Offerings Archive tells us that Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer, has received the offerings listed from the province of Kulišhinaš; it is ratified by Aššur-kitti-šeši, the Governor of the Land (Aššur-kitti-šeši šakin māti ik-ta-šar), and his seal does indeed appear on both tablet and envelope.¹⁰⁹ The envelope is introduced by the word *tuppi* (written as usual DUB.BI). His seal showing a hero grappling with a lion is also found on MARV 7.3, another sealed tablet (no doubt previously in an envelope), which records that, “in accordance with a directive of Mudammeq-Bel, royal eunuch, envoy of the king”, Izbu-lešir has issued grain to the chief musician, and “Aššur-kitti-šeši, the Governor of the Land encased”,¹¹⁰ and on MARV 6.15 (Figure 4.9; envelope introduced by *ki-šir-ti*), but Aššur-kitti-šeši himself is not mentioned in that text, either on the tablet or the envelope. Earlier, in the mid 12th century, the same phrase is used of Puša, ratifying Mutta the sheep fattener’s accounts for him (see p. 179). In each case the person sealing is not thereby acknowledging a personal liability, but seems rather to be a neutral, and perhaps more highly placed, third party brought in to approve the document. This fits equally well with the clause in MARV 8.72, which records the receipt by the “Head of the Workhouse” of an item whose identity is lost in the break, and adds “He will encase it [with] the seal of the chancellor, will deliver (it) and may then break his tablet”.¹¹¹ It is evident that the chancellor is neither the creditor nor the debtor, but likewise a ratifying third party, and the mention of the seal in this passage is sufficient to establish that *kašāru* can be used in a concrete sense to refer to a physical action which includes the application of the seal (rather than to “binding” in a metaphorical sense such as we have with *rakāsu* and *rikistu* “a contract”).¹¹²

Thus a document called a *kiširtu* was a text enclosed in an envelope bearing a more or less duplicate text, and sometimes sealed by a third party in a procedure known as *kašāru*, which must allude to the technical process of applying and sealing an envelope.¹¹³ Such

¹⁰⁹ MARV 1.73:14–15.

¹¹⁰ *ana pi našperte ša PN ša SAG MAN DUMU.KIN ša LUGAL ... Aššur-kitti-šeši šakin māti ik-ta-šar.*

¹¹¹ MARV 1.73:14–15.

¹¹² This would apply even in the unlikely event that the object of *kašāru* was not actually a case-tablet in this instance.

¹¹³ This general position is accepted in Jakob 2009, 23, and 60 (on No. 22), where *kiširtu* is rendered as a “binding document” (*bindende Urkunde*) and explained as being drawn up in order to close down pending administrative processes (*schwebende administrative Vorgänge*), normally probably in the form of a case-tablet (*Hüllentafel*). It is perhaps a little misleading to translate “binding document” in this way because the force of *kašāru* cannot be abstract here: it is not the document which is metaphorically “binding” one or more of the parties, but one or more of the parties who are physically “binding” the tablet. Note that in Jakob 2009 No. 83 we have the specialist usage of *šabātu* normally applied to *tuppu*, but here with *kiširta* as its object (“They shall deliver (the sesame) where they shall tell them, shall formally execute a ratifying document (*ki-šir-ta i-ša-bu-tu-ni*), (and then) may break their tablet”). As pointed out by Jakob, this provides a clear example of the role of the *kiširtu* in ratifying the proper completion of the administrative liability. My comment that “this suggests that *k.* refers not specifically to an envelope, or to a tablet-in-envelope, but only to a certain type of document ...” (2003a, 132) needs to be corrected accordingly, reverting to my

documents were used to provide formal retrospective ratification of an administrative transaction, acknowledging that the commodities listed have been properly disposed of – often by confirming that they have been “received” (*maḥīr*), but also sometimes “issued” (*tadin*) or “measured out” (*madid*). The supreme example of this is MARV 2.17 (VAT 18007), a single column tablet 12 cm in width and 20 cm high, with 114 lines, and an envelope bearing an approximate duplicate of the text. It records grain issues made during the construction of the new capital at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta: several sections conclude with *tadin* “issued”, but others say *ētaklū* “they have consumed” (ll. 14, 62, 94, 96, 99, 101), and the summation uses the form *ultākilū* “they have had consumed” (l. 114). So although many of the *kiširtu* which have survived are indeed “ratified receipts”, some are better described as “ratified issues”.

As yet this third-party procedure is only encountered within the state administration, and despite the formality of the procedure it does not entail witnesses. However, *kiširtu* case-tablets were also used outside the administration for public legal documents, and as we would expect in this context they were witnessed. Sealed and witnessed receipts are attested at Tell al-Rimah, for example, and at least two were case-tablets, while from Aššur comes the witnessed legal receipt KAJ 241, although the witnesses are not repeated on the envelope, introduced by the word *ki-šir-tu*.¹¹⁴ Other texts sometimes mention “case-tablets”, showing that they constituted a recognised class of documents, and all the evidence suggests that we should usually understand this to refer to “(receipts on) case-tablets”.

Seals and Sealing

The Seals

The great majority of impressions on Middle Assyrian tablets come from cylinder seals, and this agrees with the examples of Middle Assyrian glyptic which survive today. Rarely there are also impressions from stamp seals, which became much more prevalent in the first millennium. On an envelope from Durkatlimmu headed “Tablet of the king” (*tup-pí LUGAL*), which had enclosed a letter from Tukulti-Ninurta, there are the remains of multiple impressions of a stamp seal, the stone perhaps incorporated into a signet ring and showing a majestically carved bull en passant (Kühne 1997). Other instances of stamp seals, which at this time were of course well known in the eastern Mediterranean and Anatolia, and which are found occasionally in

earlier position that “it is preferable to take *kašāru* here as ‘the action of enclosing the tablet in the envelope’” (Postgate 1980, 68¹).

¹¹⁴ There is at least one other word in Middle Assyrian which definitely means “(sealed) envelope”, and that is *maknaktu*, used by Tukulti-Ninurta himself with reference to a *našpertu* in the phrase “I have sealed the envelope and the tablet with my seals” (*maknakta ū tuppa NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ia aktanak*, Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996 Nr. 9:5–6). In Neo-Assyrian texts, the word *kiširtu* was identified in Postgate 1976, 121–2 (following Ebeling) as referring to an envelope or case-tablet, and this is supported by further instances from Aššur adduced by Radner 1997, 64–5 (note that I did not write there, or intend to imply, that *kiširtu*’s meaning should be “Kopie einer Hülle” and am perfectly happy with “Hüllentafel” or case-tablet). Since in Neo-Assyrian, case-tablets are not used for receipts as in Middle Assyrian, but for contracts, the term must refer to the physical characteristics of the document rather than its textual content.

Babylonia, remain scarce.¹¹⁵ As noted by Fischer (1999, 117–18), one stamp seal impression was recovered along with Middle Assyrian cylinder seal rollings at Tell Fakhariyah, and one impression from a signet ring is reported at Tell Sabi Abyad on the Baliḥ.¹¹⁶ Nevertheless, they are so rare in Assyria that one is obliged both to wonder whether it is coincidental that two of the known examples come from the western fringes of the state, and perhaps to treat the royal seal of Tukulti-Ninurta with its bull as a forerunner of Neo-Assyrian royal seal design showing the monarch in combat with a lion, the earliest example of which dates from Shalmaneser III in the 9th century, long before stamp seals became common in Assyria. One must assume that Tukulti-Ninurta would also have had at least one cylinder seal of his own, because we know that Babu-aḥa-iddina owned at least three (see pp. 229–30).

Seal Substitutes

In Neo-Assyrian times, especially in documents from the 8th century, as opposed to the 7th century BC when stamp seals became prevalent, the persons selling their property or taking out a loan frequently did not own a seal, and in this situation the scribe would write: “Instead of his seal, he put his (finger)nail”, and in most cases impressions of a finger nail are indeed clear to see.¹¹⁷ There are now several instances of this from 12th-century Middle Assyrian texts. Three of these are loans of grain drawn from the granaries of various households, including those of the *šakin māti* (governor of Aššur province) and Samnuḫa-ašared (all in Ass. 18782 from the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive: MARV 5.41; 5.44; 7.89). On a contract from the Stewards’ Archive for a shoemaker to deliver copper tools it is presumably his nail impression visible in the blank space for sealing at the top of the obverse.¹¹⁸ The phrase “Instead of his seal, (he impressed) his fingernail” (*ki-ma NA₄.KIŠIB-šu šu-pār-šu*) is present in MARV 5.41, but none of the three texts explains the use of the nail further.¹¹⁹ The use of the nail in place of a seal is attested on Old Babylonian documents and becomes relatively frequent in Kassite Babylonia, as shown by Boyer and Oelsner, and Liverani is surely right to emphasise that a nail impression is hardly distinctive enough to serve as identification of its owner, and that the relevant point is that the debtor was seen to make this symbolic act in the presence of witnesses.¹²⁰

¹¹⁵ For probable ring stamps from Nippur see Matthews 1992, Nos. 182, 183–4, 185 and 186. It can hardly be coincidental that most if not all of these are found on bullae, but here is not the place to pursue the implications of this; Matthews hesitantly suggests that these may have been “occasionally owned by the wealthy in the thirteenth century for use in lower status contexts” (1992, 57). From Ur in the reign of Marduk-apla-iddina I, early 12th century, UET 7.26 has a stamp seal impression (Oelsner 1980, 92).

¹¹⁶ T98–2, for which see Wiggemann 2000, 197; Faist attributes the use of a stamp seal to a non-Assyrian trader (2001, 129¹⁰⁸).

¹¹⁷ See Postgate 1976, §§1.3.2 and 3.2.1.

¹¹⁸ KAJ 129, collated Freydank 1982d, 65 (p. 160 No. 13 in the Stewards’ Archive).

¹¹⁹ Similar: MARV 8.60:17 Ass. 18773m (a debt-note for sesame from the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive, from jar) has the caption “seal of Siyutu” above a row of nail impressions at the top of the obverse, but then adds as an afterthought in ll. 17–18 [x (x)]-*šu šu-pa-ar-šu ki-i NA₄.KIŠIB*. Eponym: Marduk-aha-ereš (“um 1150”). Damaged context: MARV 9.92:1.

¹²⁰ Boyer 1939; Liverani 1977, 109; Oelsner 1980, 91. Nail impressions without caption: MARV 3.38 (=Freydank 1992a, No. 28).

In Babylonia an alternative substitute for a personal seal was the use of the garment fringe (*sissiqtu*), which is found representing a person in other situations such as divorce proceedings, divination and magical rituals.¹²¹ One Middle Babylonian text from Nippur has “Nail of PN₁, Fringe of PN₂”, suggesting that the choice of a seal substitute was fairly arbitrary.¹²² In Assyria, the use of the fringe is not alluded to in the text of the tablets, but occasionally there is a visible textile impression. Two instances are the *šulmānu* contract KAJ 100, where the caption “Seal of Damqat-Tašmetu” identifies a clear textile impression on the free space left for a seal, and KAJ 91, also related to a *šulmānu* contract; it may not be a coincidence that in one case the sealing party was a woman and in the other a farmer.¹²³

Sealing Documents

Etymologically, the word *kaniku*, which is common to Middle Assyrian and Middle Babylonian, should mean “sealed (document)”. In Assyria, it seems to be a fairly general word for a sealed tablet without any further precise connotation, but it is not frequently used. Two Middle Assyrian examples were cited in Postgate 1986b, 21, but there are not yet enough fresh examples¹²⁴ to support or contradict the possibility raised there that the tablets in question were not coincidentally internal to an administration. Much more frequent is the term *tuppu šabittu*, discussed earlier, which in practice would seem to have referred to a sealed tablet: while the precise implications of the procedure of “seizing a tablet” remain uncertain (although it is possible that *šabātu* does technically refer to the act of sealing), it did not necessarily require the involvement of witnesses, but it does always seem to have included the application of the seal of the party acknowledging the liability recorded on the tablet. This is self-evident in the case of private sector legal documents recording a loan or some other form of obligation (such as a work contract), and although, as will become clear, many administrative documents from different archives recorded the movement of commodities within an organisation without witnesses,¹²⁵ documents recording a liability within the system would often be sealed (see especially pp. 137–39, 174–6, 231–2).

As at Nuzi and elsewhere, modern analysis of how seals were used on Middle Assyrian tablets has lagged behind the art historical study of the impressions themselves. Few Middle Assyrian cylinder seals were inscribed with their owners’ names, and the groundwork for 14th- to 12th-century Assyrian glyptic was done by Moortgat and Beran on the basis of seal impressions on approximately datable tablets from the excavations at Aššur.¹²⁶ Their work was

¹²¹ See copious examples in CAD S, 322–5, and for comment on the symbolic nature of the gesture Liverani 1977, 110ff.

¹²² CAD S, 323a; see though Oelsner 1980, 91, where it is pointed out that the *sissiqtu* marks impressed on the Kassite tablets from Nippur as described by Clay 1906 seem to be small circular indentations rather than textile impressions.

¹²³ See Postgate 1988a, 3–4 (No. 2) and 128–9 (No. 54); textile impressions in the Urad-Šerua archive were also noted on Nos. 13, 28 and 53, but it is not always possible to be sure that these were intentional, rather than the result of wrapping a damp tablet in a cloth. MARV 10.27, a document concerning textiles and a weaver, has a clear textile impression on the seal space at the top of the obverse (see Taf. 3 seal 9).

¹²⁴ MARV 7.42:6 has the plural *ka-ni-ka-tu* but in a damaged context which could also be internal.

¹²⁵ As at Nuzi: “Internal administrative contracts involving employees require no witnesses” (Stein 1993, 48).

¹²⁶ Moortgat 1942 (13th century); 1944 (12th century); Beran 1957 (14th century).

later enlarged and refined on the basis of the impressions on the tablets from Tell al-Rimah (Parker 1977) and Tell Billa (Matthews 1991), and it is typically the most recent of these studies that makes the main contribution to the sealing practices (Matthews 1991, 19–22). Since the Rimah and Billa texts are predominantly 13th century, as are the Urad-Šerua Archive from Aššur which was also used in Matthews’ discussion, and the impressions studied by Fischer from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (Fischer 1999), it is the 13th century which is best attested and contributes most to the following section.

Both for private sector legal documents and for internal administrative tablets the seal user acknowledging a liability will usually impress his or her seal in a blank space left for the purpose at the top of the obverse, as for instance on the single known example of a formal land sale text (BM123367; Figure 3.4). In legal documents, this is normally identified by the caption (Siegelvermerk) “Seal of PN” (KIŠIB PN),¹²⁷ but within an administrative context this is usually omitted, no doubt because the person and his seal would be sufficiently familiar not to require identification.¹²⁸ With a witnessed legal document, the witnesses also sealed (their names sometimes introduced by KIŠIB IGI or more often just IGI), and each impression often had its own caption, as often as not found on the left side of the tablet. The placement of seals has been succinctly described by Matthews as follows: “The debtor seals at the top of the obverse and the same seal is sometimes found elsewhere as well. The scribe generally seals on the reverse, either above or below, and sometimes ... perhaps on the top edge. Witnesses usually place themselves on the left edge, often in pairs, but can also appear with the scribe on the reverse. The right and bottom edges are rarely utilized” (1992, 22). Where on sealed administrative tablets there is just the one person sealing, impressions may also be placed in a blank space left above the date on the reverse.¹²⁹

The correspondence of the highly placed Babu-aḥa-iddina, discussed in Chapter 4.4, has often been cited as a *locus classicus* for sealing practices in Mesopotamia. It gives us the idiomatic usages of the verb *kanāku* “to seal” in a range of contexts usually referring to sealing objects or rooms rather than documents. The item sealed comes first, the item sealing second as an internal accusative: thus *X kunukka kanāku* is “to seal X with a seal” (KAV 99:31, 33–4; 105:21–2), *kunukkī-kunu kankā* means “seal (it) with your seals” (KAV 99:21), and we meet the slightly bewildering instruction NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-*ia* NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-*ku-nu ku-un-ka*, meaning “seal my seals with your seals” (KAV 98:38–9; 109:24–5). “Sealed with the seal of Babu-aḥa-iddina” is KIŠIB *Babu-aḥa-iddina ka-nu-ku*,¹³⁰ or NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ ša *Babu-aḥa-iddina ka-ni-ik* (KAJ 178:19–20). By itself the word *kunukkūya* means “under my seal” (KAV 203:10), and slightly different is the phrase *ina pī X kunukka kanāku* of which the nuance is “to apply a sealing to X” (e.g. KAV 99:34–5; 100:30–32; 200 rev. 9). Babu-aḥa-iddina has at

¹²⁷ Much less frequently with the determinative, NA₄.KIŠIB.

¹²⁸ A feature observed at Nuzi: “seals that have no caption usually belong to well-known officials and occur on internal administrative records” (Stein 2001, 254), and “most of these seal impressions have no caption ... as is customary on administrative records that are meant for internal reference only” (Stein 2009, 545).

¹²⁹ For examples of this see MARV 8.83 (VAT 16396 photo Tafel 14); MARV 1.39, a directive issued by Babu-aḥa-iddina; the seal impression illustrated in Figure 4.11 was on the base of the reverse of VAT 15400 from the Stewards’ Archive (MARV 3.46).

¹³⁰ Weidner 1959–60, No. 6 rev. 13–14 (D permansive for plural subject).

least three different seals, and sometimes sends one of them to his staff back in Aššur (under seal, of course). To distinguish one from another he may refer to their design – “the seal with the bull”, or “with the *laḫmu* figure” – or to where they were applied – “the seal for the store-rooms” (*ša pi-i É na-kám-a-te*).¹³¹

The quality of the best Middle Assyrian seal carving is second to none, and in the 13th century onwards most of the seals we see were recognisably Middle Assyrian in both style and subject matter. Earlier on, Nissen’s innovative study of the sealings on tablets from the 14th-century Aššur archive was able to differentiate the typical Middle Assyrian style of seals used by the scribes from the urban elite, from the less spectacular Mittanian glyptic which belonged to the villagers selling or pledging their land (Nissen 1967).

The Versatile Debt-Note

There is one English technical term which needs comment before launching into a detailed description of the different archives, and that is the *debt-note*. This term is deliberately chosen for its neutrality, so that it can apply to a wide range of bilateral documents which may have very different origins or purposes, but share their formulation of the basic statement of obligation between two parties. In the public domain this statement takes the form: “Commodity X of PN₁ (is incumbent) on PN₂” (X *ša* PN₁ *ina muḫḫi* PN₂). In administrative texts the ownership of the commodity is often given as “of the Palace” (*ša ēkalli*), or omitted altogether, and usually there follows the name of the responsible official with the phrase “in the hand of PN₁” (*ša qāt* PN₁), but beyond this bald formula the legal documents display a range of formalities some or all of which may be dispensed with in administrative texts.

As the table indicates, within the administration a debt-note is not usually witnessed, and we find only the seal of the liable party impressed on the tablet, often without a caption identifying the seal owner. This reduced formality is presumably not intended to reduce the strength of the obligation resting on the debtor, but merely reflects the fact that the two parties regularly transact business and that the sanction provided in the public domain by the presence of witnesses is unnecessary because their relationship is embedded in the administrative status quo. The application of the debtor’s seal is sufficient to ensure that the transaction is duly recognised when the ongoing bilateral situation is monitored. Mutual familiarity also explains why the scribes will dispense with the patronymics regularly supplied in legal documents to ensure correct identification, and in some cases at least why the seal did not need to be identified.¹³²

There are no hard and fast rules, and the variability in practice can best be observed in the small batch of thirty-one tablets from the Offerings Archive found in a single jar, some attributes of which are summarised in Table 4.4. The majority of these are simple debt-notes recording an obligation, without witnesses but sealed. The payment is generally due as part

¹³¹ See pp. 228–31 with Figures 4.13 and 4.14.

¹³² See later, on the absence of seal captions in some document types.

Table 3.3. *Debt-notes (e.g. loans, work or delivery contracts, offerings)*

	legal	administrative
seal of debtor	yes	yes
seal caption	yes	sometimes
envelope	no	no
witnesses	yes	not usually
witnesses' seals	yes	no
patronymics	yes	sometimes
date	yes	yes

of the debtor's obligation under the offerings regime. There are, however, cases where instead the commodity has physically been advanced to the debtor, using the verbs *ilqe* or *issuh* ("he took/withdrew"): in three cases this is in response to an instruction (*šipirtu*) received from a provincial governor (Nos. 9; 19; 31), and in two of these three cases there is a seal caption. Other debt-notes specify that a real loan is involved (using the Assyrian phrase *ana pūhi*): here too in two out of three cases there is a seal caption (Nos. 4; 12; but not 16). The seal captions are given more often in these situations than with the offerings arrears, which is understandable since such issues are not in the regular pattern of the offerings regime and may be made to an outsider. Similarly in text No. 1 the debtor who seals is a boatman from outside Aššur and therefore very likely unfamiliar to the staff of the Offerings House, and the recipients who are receiving commodities "on the instruction" of a governor may well not be regular customers, and the borrowers in Nos. 12 and 15 are requiring their commodity for a cultic event (*pandugani*) outside the remit of the Offerings House.¹³³

Similar variability is found in this group of texts with the use of patronymics and witnesses. Patronymics are used for the debtor or borrower more often than for the official creditor representing the institution. As for witnesses, under Sin-nadin-apli, the latest of the Offerings Overseers in this group, most of the debt-notes are witnessed by the "Divine Bison" (*kusarikku*), which must indicate a concern to minimise future disagreements between the parties, but one document is also witnessed by the scribe. It will not be coincidental that the debtor's seal impression on this tablet (No. 20) does have a caption, and that his father's name and his profession as a boatman are given, while the contract atypically includes a penalty clause for late delivery. Likewise in No. 10, the only tablet with a number of human witnesses, the debtor is probably a mayor from the remote provincial town of Nabula, and the arrears of offerings he is required to pay include two sheep, which do not normally feature among *ginā'u* contributions and are more likely to represent a virtual penalty for late delivery.¹³⁴ In

¹³³ It is also possible that greater formality crept into more internal transactions as time passed, because most of the later contracts are witnessed in front of the divine bison (*kusarikku*), and this may also explain the use of the seal caption in Nos. 26, 27 and 30.

¹³⁴ Note that in MARV 10.90 Izbu-lešir's predecessor as Offerings Overseer called Aba-la-ide, has been sent "9 sheep of the fixed-offerings, and 1 sheep, your audience-gift (*nāmurta-ka*)".

other words, when the administration wished to record commodities owed to it by members of the state apparatus, it used the legal formulae familiar in the private sector, but felt it could dispense with some of the formalities; and when those formalities do appear in administrative archives, we can sometimes see that the greater social distance between the parties is responsible for the scribes taking care to record personal identity, to identify the seal and occasionally to bring in witnesses.

These are general features of the debt-note which vary with the broad social context: as will become apparent, debt-notes could be used with appropriate additional phraseology to meet a whole range of different purposes, including straightforward loans, notes of arrears due, work contracts and delivery contracts (see pp. 417–19).

Classifying the Documentation

In the course of the following chapters, it will become evident that the Middle Assyrian state developed its own bureaucratic traditions which dictated both the physical appearance and the verbal content of the documents they left behind. The social and administrative context of a document affected the degree of formality required, both in the transaction as a social event, and as we have just seen in the written record of it, if one was made. While describing the written output of the different scribal offices, as well as observing their indigenous terminology and the physical appearance of the tablets, it may be convenient at times to impose our own rather more abstract classifications designed to reflect the functions they fulfilled. These can be distilled into a set of binary oppositions:

- *primary or secondary*: Is the document the first written record of an event, or does it derive its information from a prior record? In the Offerings Archive, we could easily establish a tier of primary, secondary and tertiary records, but for most purposes the contrast between primary and secondary should suffice.
- *single events or compilations*: Does the tablet represent a record of a single event – such as receipt of a single consignment, or issue of a single quantity of a commodity – or does it bring together a number of different events, for whatever purpose? Often, but by no means always, a single event will be recorded on a primary document and a compilation on a secondary document. Compilations of various kinds and various purposes are present and often tell us more than tablets recording a single event about the reason for their existence.
- *descriptive or prescriptive*: most of our documents appear to record a past event; some, however, are clearly prescriptive, using the Akkadian present tense to set out actions anticipated, such as disbursements to be made.
- *internal or external*: in some archives, for example the Offerings Archive, the majority of the texts are concerned with transmission of commodities between members of a single organisation, in other words internal transactions. Others, though, may record transactions involving individuals who are either acting in a personal capacity or as the staff of other institutions. This can affect the degree of formality observed.

- *unilateral or bilateral*: these terms serve to discriminate between texts drawn up solely to provide an institution (or in some cases, an individual) with its own written record of an event, and those which have a dispositive force intended to constitute evidence of a liability of one party vis-à-vis another, and would need to be drawn up in the presence of and with the agreement of both sides.

As a prize example of “unilateral” recording we may cite the Assyrian scribes’ endearing habit of writing at the end of a text “written down so as not to forget”, or much more neatly in Akkadian, *ana* (also *aššum*) *la mašāē šaṭir*. Here the scribe is indicating that the tablet has no other role than to jog his or his colleagues’ memory, and does not constitute a bilateral instrument, even if it records the creation or the fulfilment of an obligation.¹³⁵

- *informal or more formalised*: there are a number of criteria which lend a tablet an appearance of formality, and whose absence will tend to suggest that it does not have a formal purpose (see pp. 77–9). These differences naturally tend to correlate with the unilateral:bilateral and internal:external oppositions, with unilateral and internal texts likely to be less formally presented.
- *legal or administrative*: when applied to documents, this pair – equating to the opposition expressed by the German “Rechts- und Verwaltungsurkunden” – is not infrequently used by those writing about texts from Assyria, Nuzi and as far west as Ugarit. By *legal* is meant a document relating to the private affairs of an individual, but drawn up according to the conventions which will make it a valid document under public law. *Administrative* refers to transactions, and other records generated as part of the processes of a government institution or similar establishment (such as a temple or a large private household), which regulated administrative relationships between its members or with outsiders. There are clear differences in the terminology and format of legal versus administrative texts, inherent in the source material itself and not imposed by modern scholars. To a large extent, these terms equate with *public* and *private*, but they are often preferable to avoid misunderstanding.
- *public or private*: when referring to a transaction, *public* would naturally apply to government business, *private* to that of an individual, and there are occasions when these are used as a convenient shorthand for this opposition, despite two drawbacks. On one hand, it is slightly counter-intuitive for private documents to be those drawn up in the context of public law, which is the reason for them to be described as legal, whereas administrative texts belong within the confines of an organisation, which is usually a state institution, but may sometimes be a private household. On the other hand, there is a body of opinion which holds that the concepts of private and public are anachronistic and should not be applied to ancient Mesopotamian society (see pp. 380–1). Where either term is encountered in this volume, it is not intended to reopen this debate, but simply to convey the social context.

¹³⁵ Similar phrases are found also at Nuzi and in Babylonia (p. 367).

Archives?

The precise implications of the term *archive* in the ancient Near Eastern context have frequently been discussed in recent years,¹³⁶ but it is used throughout this book loosely to refer to an assemblage of documents found together and sharing some common features, in respect of content, date or some other criterion which suffice to show that they belonged together in some way. It is not intended to require any intentionality on the part of those who wrote and stored the tablets, although this will often have been present, so that it does not restrict the term to a collection of documents deliberately put out of current use and “archived”. It would be satisfactory if we could say that all the collections of texts discussed here could be described as “the total of records accumulated during the time a particular task was performed by an institution or person” (Veenhof 1986, 7), but this would disqualify some of our “archives”, and it seems unproductive to attempt to discriminate between different assemblages when our understanding of why documents may have been stored together is inevitably imperfect. In Maria Brosius’ words, therefore, I am applying “a terminology which considers a set of documents from the viewpoint of the state of excavation” rather than “from the point of view of the contemporary record-keeper(s) of the ancient society who had installed and used a system of archiving, storing, and discarding documents” (2003, 8). This is not intended to gloss over the significant question of whether, and when, an assemblage of texts was stored for future reference or discarded, but that is something which needs to be considered in each instance without prejudging the issue by our choice of terminology.¹³⁷

Individual Archives

Collections of clay cuneiform tablets from the second millennium BC have been found all over ancient Mesopotamia and neighbouring lands, including Iran, Syria and Anatolia. A thorough survey of these was conducted by Pedersén (1998), and for the most part there is little to add to his presentations. Through the chances of discovery, the written traces of the activities of Middle Assyrian state officials have been found in a greater number of provincial and rural centres than their contemporaries in Babylonia or their successors in the Neo-Assyrian empire. Unlike southern Iraq, in Assyria – that is, northern Iraq and north-eastern Syria – archaeological sites have suffered little at the hands of antiquities robbers, and the majority of the archives from here were recovered in the course of regular excavations, which means that we have a much better idea of their architectural context than we have for many of the south Mesopotamian archives which have reached us via the antiques trade. In some cases, erosion or mound collapse led to the exposure of groups of tablets, as at Tell Ali,

¹³⁶ For discussion of the terminology see for instance Veenhof 1986, 7–11; Pedersén 1998, 2–5; several contributions in Brosius 2003, including her introduction (pp. 6–13); von Dassow 2005, 3; and Charpin 2010, 98–9.

¹³⁷ For a more refined definition based on content, cf. von Dassow 2005, 31: “an intentionally generated and stored collection of records pertaining to a particular activity or set of activities, and pertaining to a particular individual, family, or institution”.

or Kerkuk, and on occasions such chance discoveries were followed up by organised archaeological excavation, as at Durkatlimmu, Nuzi or Emar. For the most part, though, we are fortunate that the Middle Assyrian archival material was derived from controlled excavation and can be placed in an archaeological context.

The selected Archives

Between them, the archives chosen for inclusion here illustrate a range of activities. The Stewards' Archive (Pedersén M7) is as near as we come to the internal administration of the palace, although it is physically separated from the palace building, and gives an insight into the acquisition, processing and redistribution of material goods for the state (but not principally foodstuffs). The archive of the sheep fattener Mutta provides a unique angle on the social and ceremonial aspects of palace life in the mid 12th century. The Offerings Archive is primarily concerned with the receipt and processing of a fixed range of foodstuffs supplied by the constituent provinces of the Assyrian state, and is as informative about historical geography as about the internal economy of the temple. Finally, we have two very different archives from elite households. A smaller archive of some seventy texts (Chapter 4.5) seems to have come from the house of three generations of a family who at times had responsibilities as provincial administrators in the north-western Ḫabur region, texts relating to which were found together with family documents in their Aššur residence. This illustrates the continuity of a family establishment and its relations to government office and the countryside. The Archive of Babu-aḫa-iddina (Pedersén M11) includes texts which reveal an extensive staff of officials engaged in administering a range of commodities, all in the service not of the state, but of an elaborate private enterprise. The existence of administrative archives generated by and stored in private households must be taken as characteristic of the social structure of the Assyrian state (see Chapter 6), and instantly reminds us that at neighbouring Nuzi the written documentation from large elite households considerably outnumbers the administrative texts found in the palace or other state-run buildings.

Each of these five archives is quite different from the others, and sheds light on only a restricted area within the social order. Likewise when we turn to the provinces, the archives there illuminate different sectors of the state administration. The tablets from Tell Billa (Šibaniba) north-east of Nineveh reflect the miscellaneous range of activities which fell within the remit of a provincial governor in the reign of Shalmaneser I. At Tell Chuera (Ḫarbu), a relatively small archive is very informative about the personnel making up the cadre of Assyrian officials in a provincial centre and about their responsibilities towards dependent populations on local state farms, and to Assyrian and foreign dignitaries passing through on the main east-west route through northern Mesopotamia. The published components of the voluminous archives from Durkatlimmu also concern agricultural affairs, but here they document the state's own agricultural and stock-breeding enterprises. These also emerge from the small chance find of tablets at Tell Ali, which allows us to track the sheep of state from their flocks through their wool yield to the garments on the backs of state labourers. There is a variety of disparate texts rather than a single archive from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, the newly

founded capital upstream from Aššur, some of which have already been cited. Some of these documents derive from the management of the labour force constructing the new city, others from the administration of the army or the state's agricultural enterprises. Exceptionally at Tell al-Rimah (Karana/Qatara) most of the texts relate to the activity of Assyrian families in the private sector, and some may be of 14th-century date.

Not included here, because still in the early stages of publication, are two further significant archives from the western provinces. The texts from the Japanese excavations at Tell Taban (ancient Ṭabete) on the middle Ḥabur come, fascinatingly, from a small town which retained the nominal sovereignty of a line of rulers even under Assyrian domination, while the Dutch excavators at the important Neolithic site of Tell Sabi Abyad on the Baliḥ exposed a small Assyrian *dunnu* with an archive of 500 tablets still in place, largely deriving from the business of the stewards of the farmstead, which was the personal estate of Ili-pada, Chief Chancellor and member of the cadet line of the royal family at the time of Tukulti-Ninurta. Finally, at the time of writing it is not known where in this multifaceted picture the newly recovered Middle Assyrian documents from Tell Fakhariyah on the westernmost headwaters of the Ḥabur will belong, or how they may relate to the handful already known from there.

It is striking that except at the capital itself the majority of these archives come from the reigns of Shalmaneser and Tukulti-Ninurta: after this the country went through a period of relative weakness, and as so often happens in Mesopotamia, the written output of government declines correspondingly. Two of the Aššur archives – those of the Chief Stewards (Chapter 4.2) and of Mutta (Chapter 4.3) – belong to middle and later decades of the 12th century, and the Offerings Archive reaches down into the beginning of the 11th century, but the archives recovered from the provinces mostly die out within the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta. An interesting exception is provided by the small group of private sector documents from the far north at Giricano on the upper Tigris, which date to the 11th century.¹³⁸

Archive Storage

We have two sources of evidence for the storage of documents: archaeological discoveries and statements in texts.¹³⁹ The most illuminating textual source is an inventory drawn up for the household of Urad-Šerua (KAJ 310) listing numerous containers in which documents had been stored in accordance with their content. We learn that the majority were kept in a *quppu*, a word which traditionally attracts the determinative GI and so must be a container normally manufactured from reeds. Baskets or hampers made from *Phragmites* would be light, strong, permeable to air and could be quite rigid, all attributes which may have made them suitable for unbaked clay tablets. The word *quppu* can also refer to a bird cage, and in the interests of keeping the contents clean and safe it seems likely that they had a door or a lid,

¹³⁸ Radner 2004. Most recently, two Middle Assyrian documents were retrieved from the destruction of a room in the site of Tell Qubr Abu al-'Atiq on the left bank of the Euphrates some ninety kilometres upstream of its confluence with the Ḥabur (Montero Fenollós et al. 2011).

¹³⁹ For an excellent summary of Mesopotamian practices more generally see Veenhof 1986, 11ff.

which could have been secured by a clay sealing if necessary. Having a lid would also perhaps have allowed the containers to be stacked, one on top of another, and given the numbers involved (twenty-four *quppu* are listed in KAJ 310), this may have been useful. Chests of reed or of other materials were not the only way of storing tablets, as there is ample evidence, both archaeological and textual, for the use of pottery jars.¹⁴⁰ Some at least of these, also listed in KAJ 310, were called *marsattu* “(soaking) jars, vats”.¹⁴¹ Instances of tablets in or near jars are legion: the most extreme example is the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive (see Figure 4.4), but the entire year-long archive of Mutta and private tablet archives at Tell al-Rimah and Giricano were also found in or in association with pottery jars. These need not have been specially large: Ass. 18763 from the Aššur Temple is only about 30 cm high,¹⁴² and so was the Giricano tablet jar. The mouth of the Giricano jar had been closed with the base-sherd from another vessel, which was held in place with a coarse clay sealing (though without a seal impression; Radner 2004, Abb. 60).

In some cases it seems likely that a complete room was dedicated to the storage of tablets, but this cannot always have been the case. We learn from a letter of Babu-aḥa-iddina that his valuable personal conveyance deeds were kept in his bedroom (see p. 212), but the tablets we actually have from his establishment do not include such documents, and were found in two contexts about ten metres apart, above an intramural tomb. It is possible that this is because the family vault was in a secluded part of the building, so that the ground level room(s) in the same area were considered relatively secure.¹⁴³ At Durkatlimmu, the state archives were found in a building high on the western side of the mound, in rooms full of carbonised grain, leading the excavators to assume that the tablets had fallen in from an upper storey.

The tablet chests (*quppu*) listed in KAJ 310 were kept in a room forming part of the *bēt šaḥūri*: the nature of this type of building, which is usually associated with temples, is unknown, but in this case it served also to accommodate a chariot and miscellaneous other items, and we get the impression that these documents had been banished to a general lumber room. Nonetheless, it is evident from their description why most of the tablets had been kept (see pp. 241–3). Tablets recording debts in metal, grain or animals would be retained until the debtor had paid off the loan, and documents providing evidence of purchase of land obviously needed to be preserved. As a general rule, we may presume that conveyances of land or slaves would be retained in perpetuity, whereas most loans and other debts would be relatively short term (since after the passage of an agreed stretch of time either a repayment or a revised contract would be required). It follows that in a private archive conveyance-type texts may reach back for a generation or more, while it should not be surprising if loans and similar contracts cluster together in time close to the final years of the archive.

¹⁴⁰ Frequently noted; cf. for example Postgate 2003a, 127–9; and add Fischer 1999, 119 (ramp room in temple at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta), and Giricano (Schachner/Roaf/Radner in Radner 2004, esp. p. 51).

¹⁴¹ So in KAJ 310 (= Postgate 1988a No. 50, p. 119). One of the jars holding the Aššur Temple Offerings Archives calls itself a “sealed tablet container” (*bēt kanikāte*), but pace Radner 2004, 51 the idea that *bēt tuppāte* could also mean a tablet container (as opposed to a building) was not advocated in Postgate 1986a, 31.

¹⁴² Haller & Andrae 1955, Taf. 49; note that there were circular holes through the wall of this jar at four points round its shoulder – for ventilation?

¹⁴³ See Pedersen 1992 on this point.

This is illustrated at Nuzi, where the land transactions of the Tehip-Tilla archive belong predominantly to earlier generations, compared with other private archives whose content is largely contracts from the fourth or fifth generation. Administrative, as opposed to legal, tablets would also be discarded once their usefulness was over. This leads to a curious effect, observable in many cases, which means that the most recent years of an archive are disproportionately well represented. Thus in the case of Nuzi, Negri Scafa writes, “Administrative records are kept as long as they are needed, otherwise they are usually discarded. Therefore we expected only a few texts belonging to Uḫap-tae and many texts relating to his son Šar-Teššup and this expectation was confirmed by the evidence” (2009a, 441). An extreme version of this is perhaps the situation at Pylos, where the clay tablets are thought to relate only to a single year, leading to the suspicion that their information would have been regularly transferred to longer-term documentation on a different, and perishable, medium.

Archives at Aššur: Introduction

Until the 1990s, the published documents from the Middle Assyrian state came almost exclusively from the traditional capital at Aššur, from where they had been excavated by Walter Andrae on behalf of the Deutsche Orient-Gesellschaft before 1914.¹ The number and variety of administrative documents from the Assyrian capital city still exceeds the finds from elsewhere, and the process of publishing and evaluating this material is still under way. Earlier in the 20th century, the selection of texts chosen for publication was at best haphazard: important groups, such as the Middle Assyrian Laws, or texts about the preparation of perfumed oils or horse training, received separate treatment in the form of editions and translations, but ordinary legal or administrative documents were mixed together in a couple of volumes of cuneiform hand copies, and received less attention. Particularly unfortunate was the failure of the copyists to take account of the excellent records of the excavator, which would have allowed them to reconstitute the groups or separate archives of tablets on the basis of their archaeological provenance. The information given by a whole archive greatly exceeds the sum of its individual parts, and the majority of the tablets excavated by Andrae can be assigned to such groups. The state of progress and work still to be done was described in full detail, using information from the excavators' records, by Olof Pedersén in 1985, and since then strenuous efforts have been made by Helmut Freydanck to make available hand copies of the outstanding material in Berlin, while much more is now known about the contents of the Istanbul collection thanks to Veysel Donbaz. Nevertheless, some archives remain only partially available in hand copy, and a full edition of a complete group remains the exception.² Yet much is known of the composition of the different archives, and any historical study of the material from Aššur needs to make its own attempt to reconstruct them. This chapter will therefore address the central theme through the study of the five best represented Aššur archives. Ideally, it would be based on a proper edition of all the texts, but that is way beyond the scope of this book, and would in any case be unsatisfactory when there are outstanding unpublished documents which still need to be included.

For each archive, it is desirable to know its location within the city and within the building, the conditions of its discovery (in jars? scattered across the floor? in a single room?) and, as far as possible, its dates, although fully comprehensive discussion of the precise

¹ Further Middle Assyrian tablets were discovered by a renewed German expedition to the site and by Iraqi excavators at the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century (see Frahm 2002).

² E. F. Weidner led the way in 1935–6 with his edition of and commentary on the Archive of Mutta.

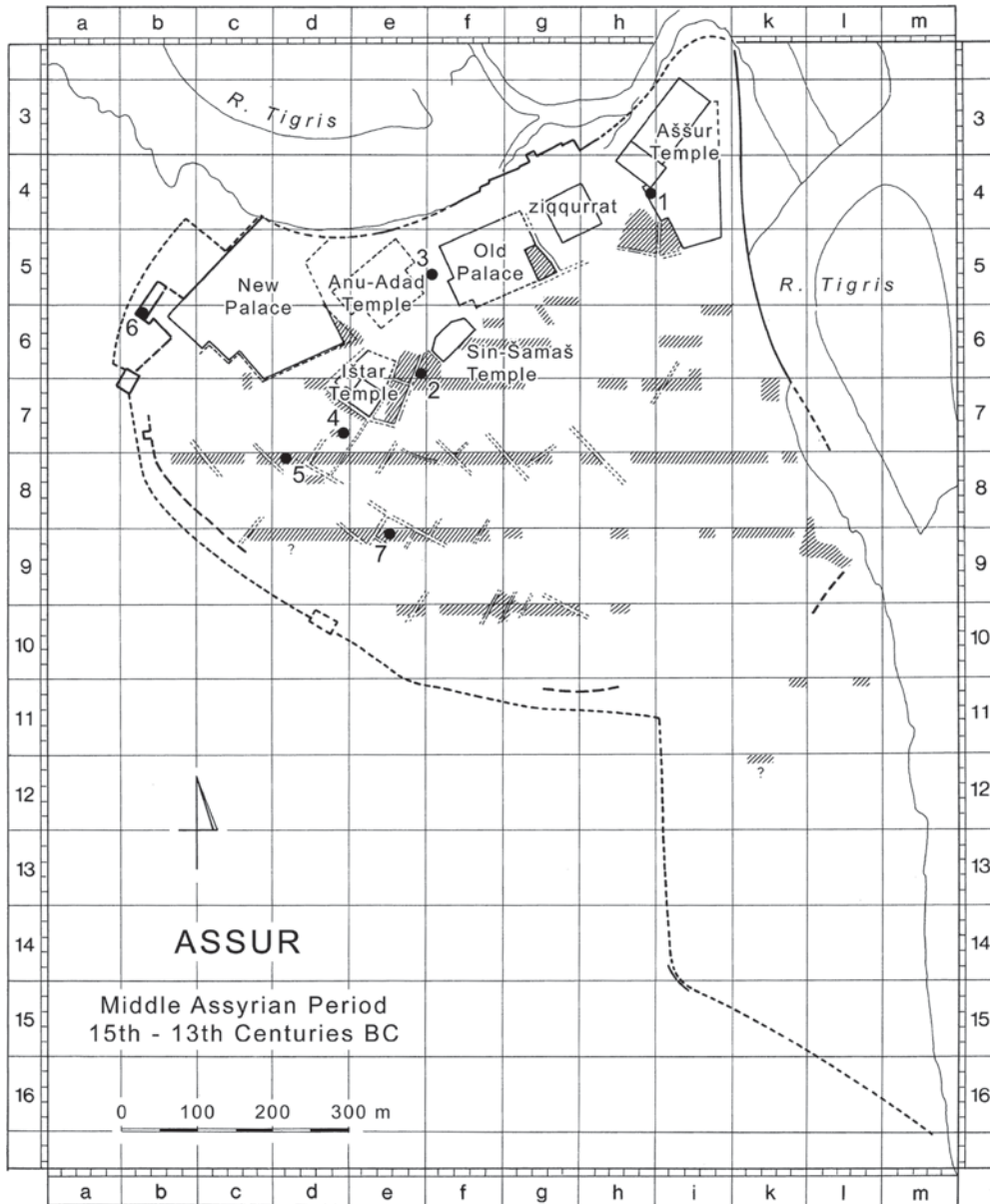


Figure 4.1. Middle Assyrian Aššur, showing provenance of archives. (1) Offerings Archive, (2) Stewards' Archive, (3) Archive of Mutta, (4) Archive of Babu-aḫa-iddina, (5) Urad-Šerua, (6) Archive of Ubru, and granary (Pedersén M8), (7) Archive of Šilli-Aššur (Pedersén M13). Plan © P. Miglus.

chronology would be unduly laborious and usually immaterial to the points at issue. More important perhaps is the reason the texts in question were kept (and/or found) together. This last is of course potentially very complex. It means establishing the subject matter of the documents, and deciding from internal indicators in whose possession we would



Figure 4.2. Aerial view of Aššur from the north, showing excavated areas and the East–West test trenches at 100 m intervals. © Georg Gerster/Panos.

expect them to have been placed. In some archives, it is easy to see that the majority of the documents relate to the affairs of a single person or a family, but within a group as defined by the excavators' records we often find individual texts with no obvious connection to the remainder. This is not a reason to doubt the evidence of the excavator, but merely underlines the variety of reasons texts might be housed together, and our ignorance of the background to many transactions. To take a simple example, the greater number of tablets from Ass. 14327 (Urad-Šerua's archive; Pedersén's archive M10) involve one or another of three generations of an Aššur family in whose house they were probably found; there are, however, single pieces recorded as forming part of the archive, which do not involve Urad-Šerua, his father, Melisaḥ, or his grandfather, Aššur-aḥa-iddina. In such cases, it will often be impossible to reconstruct the reason for its inclusion, but this should not of itself cast doubt on its provenance.

4.1 | The Offerings House Archive

This is the largest single archive from Aššur, and also predominantly the latest, comprising more than 600 tablets, with the majority probably from the earlier part of the reign of Tiglath-pileser I. Stored and excavated in a room south-west of the main courtyard of the Aššur Temple, the tablets are the records of the organisation responsible for receiving, processing and issuing the food and drink fixed offerings for the “House of Aššur”, the Assyrian national god, which were sent in year on year from each of the provinces making up the Assyrian state.

As the diagram in [Figure 4.5](#) shows, the fixed offerings arrived in the form of cereals, sesame, honey and fruit. The Offerings House was responsible for processing some of the grain into bread or similar foods, some of it into beer, and some of the sesame into oil. In addition to boatmen and purely administrative officials, who must have included scribes although their professions are not usually mentioned, the establishment therefore included staff to oversee the grinding or pounding of the grain, and then the processing into bread, cakes or beer. Sesame likewise had to be processed by an oil presser and some of the fruit and honey by the confectioner. In due course all these products would be “issued” or “poured” as offerings in the cult.

The head of the Offerings House was the Offerings Overseer, in many cases the Izbu-lešir mentioned on the incised tablet jars to be described shortly. He is called “the servant of Tiglath-pileser” and was no doubt directly answerable to the king for this important duty. It is clear that the everyday foodstuffs contributed by the different provinces to the kitchens of the national shrine were a material symbol of their membership of the Assyrian state, and so fundamental to the institution of the monarchy.

From the inscriptions incised on two of the jars in which the tablets had been stored we learn that some of them were “the accounts of the brewers”, and others were documents “of the confectioners and oil pressers” of the House of Aššur. Indeed, the majority of the tablets recovered do record the day-by-day movement of small or large volumes of the materials within the organisation. A lesser number are mostly unsealed and unwitnessed secondary compilations of many different transactions over a period of time, and these include a number of tabulated annual statements setting out the total contributions received from each province, while one batch of tablets, found inside a third inscribed jar, comprises often sealed records of unrecovered debts to the Offerings House. So this archive can be said to display three broad categories of documentation: informal records of the movement of commodities through the system, more formal sealed and sometimes witnessed documents recording transactions with external parties and the storage of data monitoring both internal and external transactions over a period of time.

The Archives of the Offerings House in the Temple of Aššur

In 1911, Andrae's team came across about 650 tablets in a sloping passageway on the south-west side of the outer courtyard of the Aššur Temple (Room 3', see Figure 4.3) along with 10 pottery jars which had contained them (see Figure 4.4).³ Three of these jars had inscriptions⁴ on them defining their contents:

Ass. 18827: "Sealed document container of the accounts of the brewers of the House of Aššur, in the charge of Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer of the House of Aššur, servant of Tukulti-apil-Ešarra, strong king, king of the world, king of Assyria."⁵

Ass. 18766: "Of the confectioner(s) and oil presser(s) of the House of Aššur, in the charge of Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer of the House of Aššur, servant of Tukulti-apil-Ešarra, strong king, king of the world, king of Assyria. Month Šippu, 20th day, eponymate of Ištu-Aššur-ašamšu, son of Aššur-aḫa-iddina".⁶

Ass. 18763: "Of Šamaš-aḫa-erīš, son of Riš-Marduk".⁷

The inscriptions on the first two jars indicate that some at least of these tablets should represent the archives of an official called Izbu-lešir, who bore the titles "Offerings Overseer (*rab gināē*) of the Aššur Temple, servant of Tiglath-pileser". The offerings in question are identified as *ginā'ū*, a word whose Sumerian etymology is probably still reflected in the sense that this was a "fixed" or "regular offering",⁸ and Izbu-lešir was in charge of the "Offerings House",⁹ of which Room 3' was presumably a part. A general survey of the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive was provided by Freydank (1997b) ("Mittelassyrische Opferlisten aus Assur"); since

³ Pedersén 1985, 43 archive M4. For a photo of some of the jars in situ from the opposite direction see Pedersén 1989, 158 (Ass.Ph. 5685). Plans: Haller & Andrae 1955, Abb. 14; Heinrich 1982, Abb. 317.

⁴ To judge from the photograph of Ass. 18782 in Haller & Andrae 1955 Taf. 49, the text was inscribed before firing when the clay was still damp, not incised after firing.

⁵ ¹ É *ka-ni-ka-a-te*^{mes} *ša* NÍG.KA₆.MEŠ ² *ša* LÚ.ŠIM.MEŠ *ša* É ³ *a-šur* ³ *ša* ŠU ¹ *iz-bu-SI.SÁ* GAL *gi-na-e'* (copy: A) ⁴ *ša* É *aš-šur* IR ¹IGI+DUB–DUMU.ÚS–É.ŠÁR.RA ⁵ MAN KALAG MAN KIŠ MAN KUR *aš-šur* (KAH II 64).

⁶ ¹ *ša* ^{1a}*ka-kar-di-ni* ù LÚ.IÀ.SUR *ša* É *aš-šur* ² *ša* ŠU ¹ *iz-bu-SI.SÁ* GAL *gi-na-e* *ša* É *aš-šur* ³ IR ¹IGI+DUB–DUMU.ÚS–É.ŠÁR.RA MAN KALAG MAN KIŠ ⁴ MAN KUR ^{4a}*šur* ⁵ ITI *ši-pu* UD.20.KÁM *li-mu* ¹*iš-tu-aš-šur-a-šam-šu* ⁶ DUMU ^{1a}*aš-šur-PAB*(or ŠEŠ)–SUM-*na* (reconstructed after Weidner 1935–6, 28²¹³; the cuneiform is not published to my knowledge).

⁷ ¹ *šá* ^{1a}UTU–ŠEŠ–KAM ² DUMU *ri-iš*–^dAMAR.UTU (Weidner 1952–3, 213; photo Haller & Andrae 1955, Taf. 49). There were round holes (for aeration?) in the wall of this jar, and on one side, above and to the right of the second part of the inscription, an incised four-sided shape similar to an ox-hide ingot.

⁸ *gin.a* meaning "established, fixed". In Middle Assyrian the word is written *gi-na-ú*, occasionally *gi-na-a-ú* (MARV 7.27:6), and once *gi-na-ú.MEŠ* (MARV 7.83:4'). Despite this *ginā'ū* can be construed as a singular collective noun, as shown by phrases like *gi-na-ú maḫ-ru* (e.g. MARV 5.14:25), *gi-na-ú ba-ti-iq* (MARV 6.65:24), with the genitive written *gi-na-e*, *gi-na-a-e* (MARV 7.1:2), *gi-na-i(-šu-nu)* (MARV 7.86.13). It is often unclear whether forms are singular or plural. The translation "offering" is not wholly satisfactory. In line with its apparent etymology we should usually add "fixed", but even then the distinction does not emerge between these periodical contributions which flow into the temple establishment from the community in fulfilment of an agreed system, and the cultic oblations placed before the gods in their cellae.

⁹ É *gi-na-e*: for example offerings "received in the Offerings House" MARV 6.8:8; 6.12:8; 6.34:8; 7.36:9; 7.51:13(?); "he shall measure out in the Offerings House" MARV 7.71:8; loan made "in the Offerings House" MARV 7.28:3'; cf. 7.5 rev.14'.



Figure 4.3. Plan of the Middle Assyrian Aššur Temple (after Heinrich 1982, Abb 317).



Figure 4.4. Aššur Temple Room 3': tablet jars in situ. (Photo Ass. 5686.) © Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Vorderasiatisches Museum, Photoarchiv.

then many more texts have been published by him in MARV 5-10.¹⁰ The bulk of the surviving archive does indeed appear to have been written under the regime of Izbu-lešir, who held office during the long reign of Tiglath-pileser I (1114-1076), although certain texts were written under his predecessors in office in the 12th century, and there is the occasional reference to the fixed offerings (*ginā'ū*) in texts from the time of Tukulti-Ninurta.¹¹ As overseer of the offerings, he was no doubt expected to ensure the delivery of the necessary consignments

¹⁰ For texts published earlier see Pedersén 1985, 43–53; since then the remainder of the archive in Berlin has been published in the MARV series, and well over half the total is now available. The ten texts from this archive published in MARV 10 reportedly exhaust Berlin's holdings (see MARV 10, p. VIII). Unfortunately the article Maul 2013 devoted to the Archive appeared too late to take account of here.

¹¹ For documentation from earlier in the 12th century see the succession of Offerings Overseers set out in Freydank 1992a on the basis of the Ass. 18764 archive, discussed p. 120 (also in Jakob 2003, 176–7 under *rab ginā'ē*). Most if not all of the tabulated accounts of provincial contributions also come from earlier than Tiglath-pileser (see Freydank 2006, updating comments in Freydank 1997b, and for a possibly still earlier form of deliveries account cf. his comment in MARV 5 p. 12 on No. 55). Note that MARV 8.59 records grain received from Aššur-baissunu by “Aššur-našir, son of Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer (GAL *gi-na-e*)”, where the title probably applies to the son; this text mentions the Governor of the Land Šaḫḫutu and belongs to the later reign of Tiglath-pileser I (Llop 2010c, 352; Freydank 2011b, 358–9). For early mentions of *ginā'ē* cf. MARV 4.115 (Freydank 2009a, 21); MARV 9.18:24' (Freydank 2009a, 53).

from the designated contributors and to arrange for the requisite amounts to be processed and in due course consumed in the cultic proceedings of the temple.

The offerings for which the Offerings Overseer was responsible reached his office in four categories: grain, honey, sesame and fruit. The contributors were in almost all cases the provincial governors, and the system was sufficiently regularised that in the annual statements the provinces are regularly listed in a standard order, with only minor variations (see Table 4.1).

Once received, the contribution would presumably be stored ready for consumption, or if needed, for further processing: grain was mostly converted into bread or beer, and sesame was pressed to give oil, but also used in foodstuffs. The honey and fruit may have needed no further treatment but could be made into cakes as well. The food processors – bakers, brewers, oil pressers and other culinary specialists – were probably all in some sense regular employees of the temple, but Izbu-lešir's office kept copious records of the amounts of the raw materials issued to them. Once processed, the produce was ready to be used in the cult. Some must undoubtedly have been prepared and placed in the shrines of the Aššur Temple in front of the deities – not just Aššur, but also his spouse and others who had shrines within the precincts – although the divine diet was doubtless also enhanced by items which do not pass through the Offerings House at all (as for instance sheep and wine, for the provision of which other arrangements must have existed).¹² This phase of the system is much less well represented in the recovered archives, but it does seem probable that records would have been kept,¹³ though perhaps not by the Offerings House, and a few texts confirm that the gods did indeed receive their meals (see pp. 117–19).

We can say all this because of the wealth of documentation which has now been published from Izbu-lešir's archives, but we are singularly ignorant about his subordinates who must have managed the operation and actually written the tablets. Whereas individual food processors sometimes have their profession specified, and Izbu-lešir himself is often given his title “Offerings Overseer” (*rab gināē*), we cannot point to any professional designation which clearly refers to a member of the *administrative* staff of the Offerings House under his authority. Yet they must have existed, and some of them at least must be named in the documentation but without a title. The most likely candidate for a deputy of Izbu-lešir's is Aššur-baissunu, who is encountered in a number of documents issuing commodities to food processors, predominantly dated to the eponymate of Ninuayu. MARV 9.112 mentions him three times, and a section of the text is worth citing verbatim:

PAB 192 ANŠE 3BÁN ŠE-um^{mes}
8 ANŠE 5BÁN ZÍD.DA.MEŠ
[š]a ŠU 'aš-šur-ba-is-su-nu
[š]a i+na Ē na-kám-te tab-ku-ni

Total: 192.3 homers of grain,
8.5 homers of flour,
in the charge of Aššur-baissunu,
which was stored in the store-house.

¹² For a rare (or even unique) instance of sheep entering the Offerings House see MARV 10.90:13 (9 UDU.MEŠ ša gi-na-e).

¹³ Compare for instance the “writing-boards of sacrifices” (Akkadian: *le-a-ni ša SISKUR.MEŠ*), mentioned as the source one of the Chief Feltmaker's animal skin accounts (pp. 163–4 No. 19, MARV 2.19).

Table 4.1. *Tabulated annual offerings lists*

	MARV 2.21	MARV 6.82 Obv.	MARV 6.82 Rev. (deficit)	MARV 8.24	MARV 5.14	MARV 7.27	MARV 9.12	MARV 5.1	MARV 5.2
<i>limmu</i>	<i>Pa'uzu</i>	<i>Pišqiya</i>	[]	<i>Liptanu</i>	<i>Aššur-iddin</i>	<i>Adad-riba</i>	<i>Salmanu-zera-iqiša</i>	<i>Sa[ggiu]</i>	<i>Saggiu</i>
King	mid-12th	Nae		Nae	1178-38	1202-1192		Nae	Nae
Date	22.[x]	[x.x]	[x.x]	Not dated	Not dated		Not dated	20.Ḫibur	20.Ḫibur
1	Arbail	[Arbail]	[]	Arbail	Arbail	Arbail	Arbail	Arbail	Arbail
2	Kilizu	[Kilizu]	[]	Kilizu	Kilizu	Kilizu	Kilizu	Kilizu	Kilizu
3	Ḫalahḫu	[Ḫalahḫu]	[]	[Ḫalahḫu]	Ḫalahḫu	Ḫalahḫu	Ḫalahḫu	Ḫalahḫu	Ḫalahḫu
4	Talmuššu	[Talmuššu]	[]	[Talmuššu]	Talmuššu	Talmuššu	Talmuššu	Talmuššu	
5	Idu	Idu	[]	[Idu]	Idu	Idu	Idu	Idu	Idu
6	Katmuḫu	Katmuḫu	[]	Katmuḫu	Katmuḫu	Katmuḫu	Katmuḫu	Katmuḫu	Katmuḫu
7	Šudu	Šudu	[]	Šudu	Šudu	Šudu	Šudu	Šudu	Šudu
8	Taidu		[]	Taidu	Taidu	Taidu	Taidu	Taidu	Taidu
9	Amasaku		[]	Amasaku	Amasaku	Ama[saku]	Amasaku	Amasaku	Amasaku
10	Kulišḫinaš		[]		Kulišḫinaš		Kulišḫinaš	Kulišḫinaš	Kulišḫinaš
11	URU ^d a-šur	URU ^d a-šur	[]	URU aš-šur	URU ^d a-šur		[URU aš-šur]	URU aš-šur	URU aš-šur
12	Upper Province		[]		Upper Province		[Upper] Province	Šuadikanu	Šuadikanu
12a			[]					Šukanu	Uššukanu
13	Lower Province	Lower Province	[]		Lower Province		Lower Province	Lower Province	Lower Province
14	Turšan		[]	Turšan	Turšan		Turšan	Turšan	
15	Libbi-ali	Libbi-ali	[]	Libbi-ali			Libbi-ali	Libbi-ali	
16	Ninua		[]	Ninua	Ninua	Ninua*			Ninua
17	Kurda	Kurda	[]	Kurda		Kur[da]	Kurda*		
18	Apku	Apku	[]	Apku		[Apku]	Apku*		Apku*
19	Addariq	Addariq	Addariq	Addariq	Addariq	[Addariq]	Addariq*		Addariq
20	Karana	Karana	Karana	Karana		[Karana]		Karana	
21	Šimanibe	[]	Šimaniba	Šimanibe		Šimaniba			
22	Ḫiššutu	[]	Ḫiššutu	Ḫiššutu	Ḫiššutu	Ḫiššutu	Ḫiššutu	Ḫiššutu	Ḫiššutu
23	Šimi	[]	Šimi	Šimi	Šimi	Šimi	Šimi	Šimi	
24	Ḫusananu	[]	Ḫusananu	Ḫusananu	Ḫusananu				Ḫusananu°
25	Kalḫu	[]	Kalḫu	Kalḫu	Kalḫu	Kalḫu	Kalḫu	Kalḫu	Kalḫu
26	Šašili	[]	Šašili	Šašili					
27	Šumela	[]	Šumela	Šumela			Šumela		
Total	27	max 21		24	20	18	23	20	19

* An additional entry Ša²[after this line. * Placed after Ḫiššutu. ° Placed after Kalḫu. * Placed after Addariq.

¹⁵ ŠU.NIGÍN 2 ME 8BÁN *a-di ŠE-um*^{mes}

ù ZÍD.DA.MEŠ *ša i+na ŠU-at*

¹*aš-šur-ba-is-su-nu* ù ¹*na-ni-ki*

LÚ.ŠIM.MEŠ ù *a-láh-ḫi-ni*

ša É.DINGIR maḫ-ru-ni

²⁰ ZÍD.DA.MEŠ *ša* ¹*iz-bu-SI.SÁ*

a-na pu-ú-ḫi is-su-ḫu-ni

a-na lib-bi la ka-mir

Total: 200.8 homers including the grain and flour, which, from the charge of Aššur-baissunu and Naniki, the brewers and bakers of the temple received.

The flour which Izbu-lešir withdrew on loan is not added into it.

MARV 9.112:11-22

Here Aššur-baissunu plainly has administrative responsibility for the commodities, suggesting that he was a member of the management team. This role is also reflected in a group of sealed bilateral texts from the same year, which list commodities issued from a variety of sources which include “from the administrative responsibility of (*ina pitte*) Aššur-baissunu” alongside “the House of Samnuḫa-ašared” and “the House of the Governor of the Land”,¹⁴ and also in MARV 7.86 where a group of six brewers and bakers receive issues for the work-assignments of the House of Aššur from the charge of Aššur-baissunu. Even more suggestive is MARV 6.81, a case-tablet sealed by a baker and listing amounts received by brewers and bakers from the charge of Aššur-baissunu, which has a supplementary note: “It was issued as though from the charge of (*ki-i ŠU*) Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer.” MARV 8.68 is an unsealed memorandum which lists relatively small amounts of grain “of” (*ša*) “the House of Aššur-kitti-šeši [i.e. the Governor of the Land]”, Aššur-baissunu, Aššur-šuma-iddina, the steward [of the temple, cf. MARV 6.89:7], Izbu-lešir and the Palace Overseer (*rab ēkalli*). All this indicates that he must have held a position close to that of Izbu-lešir himself, but there is no clue to what it may have been called. One possibility is that he was the senior scribe attached to the Offerings House and was able to stand in for his superior on occasion, but other solutions could be suggested.¹⁵ As for other potential administrative members of staff, note that the phrase *ana/ina pitte*, which we have to translate rather laboriously as “in(to) the administrative responsibility of”, is also found with Siqi-Aššur-ašbat in MARV 6.19, where he appears to be the issuing authority, as also in MARV 6.24.¹⁶ Others may well be lurking in the texts, but not even the scribes, who must have been there to write the tablets, are given their professional titles, and to explore the possible candidates fully would entail a prosopographical study for which time and space are lacking.¹⁷

In brief, that is the picture as it emerges from the documents belonging to Izbu-lešir’s period of office. The system whereby the component provinces of the Assyrian state supplied

¹⁴ These texts, from Ass. 18782, some of which were first published in *Sumer* 24 by Dr B. K. Ismail, include MARV 5.41; 5.44; 5.65; 7.76; 7.89; 9.112; see for some of these Llop 2008a, and Freydank 2011b. On Aššur-baissunu’s function and date late in Tiglath-pileser’s reign, cf. Llop 2008a, 181.

¹⁵ Compare pp. 50–1 where examples of scribes acting as second in command to another are cited.

¹⁶ His name also appears in MARV 9.112:2 as a source of grain parallel with the House of Samnuḫa-ašared like Aššur-baissunu, but as one of a group of bakers receiving grain in MARV 6.23.

¹⁷ Šilliya, the author of KAJ 302, a letter addressed to “Izbu-lešir my lord”, probably represented one of the contributing provinces, rather than being a member of the staff of the Offerings House.

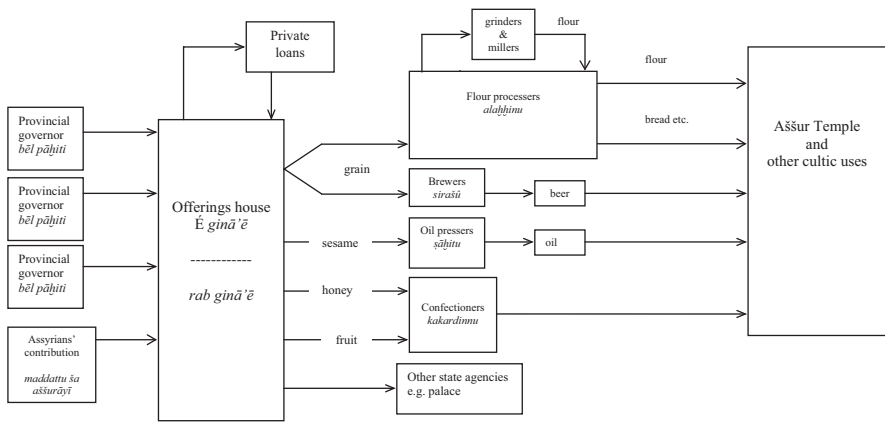


Figure 4.5. Diagram of movement of offerings.

daily sustenance for the national god, Aššur and his temple is reminiscent of similar systems attested in third-millennium south Mesopotamia. The obligation of provincial governors to contribute to the offerings regime of the Aššur Temple is also attested in the Neo-Assyrian period. Provinces are reported then for being late with their delivery of sheep, and when Esarhaddon annexes the Nile delta to the “Land of Aššur” he fixes the level of its contributions of foodstuffs to the Aššur Temple, rather than imposing tribute payable to him as the secular overlord.¹⁸ It seems evident that participation in the offerings regime symbolised each province’s membership of the “Land of Aššur”, just as in a local context the established members of a sedentary community would be expected to make their contributions to the local temple. Nevertheless, while the general philosophy behind the system seems fairly transparent, many detailed uncertainties remain: Were these contributions only used to supply regular daily meals for the shrines, or were they stored up for exceptional occasions such as annual festivals? Were no other foodstuffs used for the divine meals? Did some of the produce go directly to feeding the personnel of the temple without even nominally being presented in the shrines? Did the royal palace exercise rights over the temple’s stocks of foodstuffs? Did the temple treat its income from the fixed offerings as a form of capital and use it in commercial transactions with secular society? As most of the texts from the archive are published, the answers to some of these questions may gradually emerge. For now we can observe the Offerings House in action, and the main stages of the organisation are summarised in Figure 4.5, in accordance with which we here follow the movement of offerings through the system.

¹⁸ See Postgate 1992; Esarhaddon’s so-called *Sammeltext* mentions that he decreed (*rakāsu*) contributions from different annexed localities of sheep, honey, crushed grain (*ḥašlāte*), aromatics and another cereal product called *pinigu* (probably = MA *pannigu*) “from those lands which Aššur great lord had entrusted to me” (Borger 1956, 93–4). This sounds familiar.

Deliveries to the Offerings House

One small group of tablets from the archive gives us a comprehensive view of the source of the offerings (Table 4.1).¹⁹ They were ruled into rows and columns which tabulate the amounts of four types of food offering (grain, honey, sesame and fruit) attributed to a series of as many as 27 toponyms, which can be confidently be identified as the provinces of the Assyrian state, because they are occasionally explicitly identified as such (“offerings of the provinces received”²⁰). Twenty-five 5-column documents of this kind have been identified in Berlin (Freydank 2006, 219), and it now seems that they predominantly date to before the reign of Tiglath-pileser I, including three from the time of Ninurta-apil-Ekur (1181-1169), with others from around the middle of the 12th century.²¹

MARV 2.21 (Table 4.2), probably dating to the mid 12th century, is one of the best preserved of these accounts tablets.²² Although many of the tablets from the time of Izbu-lešir must belong later, in the reign of Tiglath-pileser, we may have only one tabulated annual account from this time.²³ The fact that the majority of these accounts come from earlier than the main body of the archive is irritating but not unduly surprising: it presumably means that they were valued for the long term and retained accordingly, unlike the more ephemeral tablets. Such annual account tablets are secondary, not to say tertiary, documents: that is to say, they have been compiled from primary and secondary records. As described later in this chapter, there is a wide variety of these, some of which list “completed offerings” (*ginā'u šalmu*), which would seem to imply that the full amount expected had been received. However, this was not universally the case, and so we also find tabulated accounts which do not record offerings received but rather the “deficits, arrears” (*muṭṭā'u*), that is amounts not yet delivered and still outstanding.²⁴ As with the offerings actually received, we have tablets listing individual deficits which would have served as the basis for compiling a unified annual deficits table.²⁵

¹⁹ See Freydank 1997b, updated by Freydank 2006, 218–21; further examples are now published as MARV 9.1, 2.6, 9 and 12.

²⁰ *gi-na-ú ša pa-ḥa-te maḥ-ru*, MARV 6.3:31; cf. MARV 7.22 *gi-na-ú maḥ-ru ša pa-ḥa-a-te*.MEŠ; and similar phrasings in MARV 6.70:1 and 7.51:10.

²¹ The earliest seems to be MARV 7.27, eponym Adad-riba, who perhaps held the office in the reign of Enlil-kudurri-ušur (1186–1182 BC) (Freydank, MARV 7 p. 9).

²² On the basis of MARV 6.39, Freydank 2007 has made it virtually certain that a Pa'uzu son of Erib-Aššur was eponym in the mid 12th century, and MARV 2.21 should perhaps therefore be assigned to his term of office rather than to his much later namesake Pa'uzu, eponym for the thirty-eighth year of Tiglath-pileser (~1077). However, note that, as pointed out by Freydank (1997b, 49), the detailed entry for Talmušu in VAT 15468 [now = MARV 5.42], dated to the eponymate of Ḫiyašayu, assigned to the reign of Tiglath-pileser, is repeated precisely in MARV 2.21 dated to Pa'uzu (see pp. 133, 136). In either case, this speaks for long-term consistency in the level of contributions from some at least of the provinces.

²³ MARV 6.1 from the eponymate of Ḫiyašayu. It would be tempting to assume that MARV 9.12, dated to Salmanu-zera-iqiša, which repeats precisely the first four lines of MARV 5.42, belongs to the same time, but in light of the previous footnote this argument may not be valid.

²⁴ For example MARV 7.6:28 *gi-na-ú LÁ*.MEŠ *ša pa-ḥa-a-te ša li-me* PN; cf. 6.82; 9.2.

²⁵ For example MARV 5.64 and there are others. A sealed debt-note for the fixed offerings deficit of Ḫalahḫu reads *mi-im-ma an-ni-ú mu-uṭ-ṭa-ú ša gi-na-e ša li-me* PN (MARV 7.71).

Table 4.2. (see Figure 4.6) *Provincial contributions (in homers) for the eponymate of Pa'uzu (MARV 2.21)*

	Grain [ŠE-um.MEŠ]	Honey [LÀL.MEŠ]	Sesame ŠE.GIŠ.I[À]	Fruit <i>a-za-^ram^l-ru</i>	
2	230.7	1.6	9	5.16	Arbail
3	72		7		Kilizu
4	254.5	1.2	15.4		Ḫalahḫu
5	135.6				Talmuššu
6	135.6	0.77	7.7		Idu
7	180	1.87 [?]	5.4	7.1	Katmuḫu
8	77.1	0.36		0.7	Šudu
9		0.88	8.8	5	Taidu
10			6.6	6.7	Amasaki
11		0.33	3.3	3.3	Kulišḫinaš
12		0.88	8.8	5.9	URU ^a šur
13		1.7	18	9.1	Upper Province
14		0.2	8.9		Lower Province
15	[]			[]	Turšan
16	[]	[]			Libbi-ali
17	[]				Ninua
18					Kurda
19					Apku
20		0.4		2.7	Addariq
21					Karana
22					Šibanibe
23		0.66			Ḫiššutu
24					Šimi
25					Ḫusananu
26	63.5		1.75		Kalḫu
27					Šašili
28					Šumela
29	[1]300 [+x]	11.2[]	100.57	46.66	“received of the provinces”

The fact that in MARV 2.21 some of the provinces listed have apparently made no contributions underlines the fact that the scribes are following a conventional list, and strongly suggests that this is to be seen as a comprehensive list of the provinces at the time. This is supported also by the fact that the same order is regularly followed in the other annual tabulated accounts, with only a few exceptions.²⁶ In Postgate 1985 an attempt was made to

²⁶ See Table 4.1 and Freydank 2006, 220 for the two final cities in the list, Šašilli and Šumela, which are omitted in some cases. In Freydank 1997b, 52⁴³ it was noted that in VAT 18144 (now published as MARV 4.127), which dates back to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I, provinces are “ähnlich gruppiert”, and a similar observation can be made about MARV 4.61, probably also from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta in view of the appearance of Libur-zanin-Aššur (see Freydank 2006, 221²²; 2009a, 46–8). These documents are not to do with the Aššur Temple offerings, but come from the secular administration in Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta. The lists are incomplete and by no means identical, but note for instance that

Figure 4.6. A tabulated fixed offerings account (MARV 2.21). © H. Freydank. For photo see Maul 2013, 567.

locate the provinces on the map. Some, like Nineveh or Kalḫu, are well-known cities whose location is beyond doubt, but in other cases we have no clues at all to their location. We can see a geographical logic in some sections of the standard list: thus cities on the upper Ḫabur (Šudu, Taidu, Amasaku and Kulišḫinaš) are listed together, as are the cities in the jezirah going towards the Ḫabur from Aššur (Kurda, Apku, Addariq and Karana). Advances have been made since 1985 and are observed in the revised version of the map (Figure 2.1). The Durkatlimmu archives have revealed that the Upper Province and the Lower Province (Nos. 13-14) are on the Syrian Ḫabur,²⁷ and the anomaly of the Assyrian frontier swooping down

the pair of Šašilli and Šumela occur in that order at the end of both lists – it is frustrating that we have no idea where they are – and that Nineveh, Kalḫu and Ḫusananu, which immediately precede the final pair in MARV 4.61, also feature in the latter half of the standard list (and in the case of Nineveh and Kalḫu in MARV 4.127). There are other similarities which justify Freydank's opinion that they are "ähnlich gruppiert". See now also MARV 10.61 with Freydank's comment on page 7.

²⁷ See Jakob 2003, 316; now Röllig 2008, No. 22. In Table 4.1, the listing of Š(u)adikānu in two contexts in the twelfth row where the other texts have "Upper Province" may hint that this town was usually included in the Upper Province.

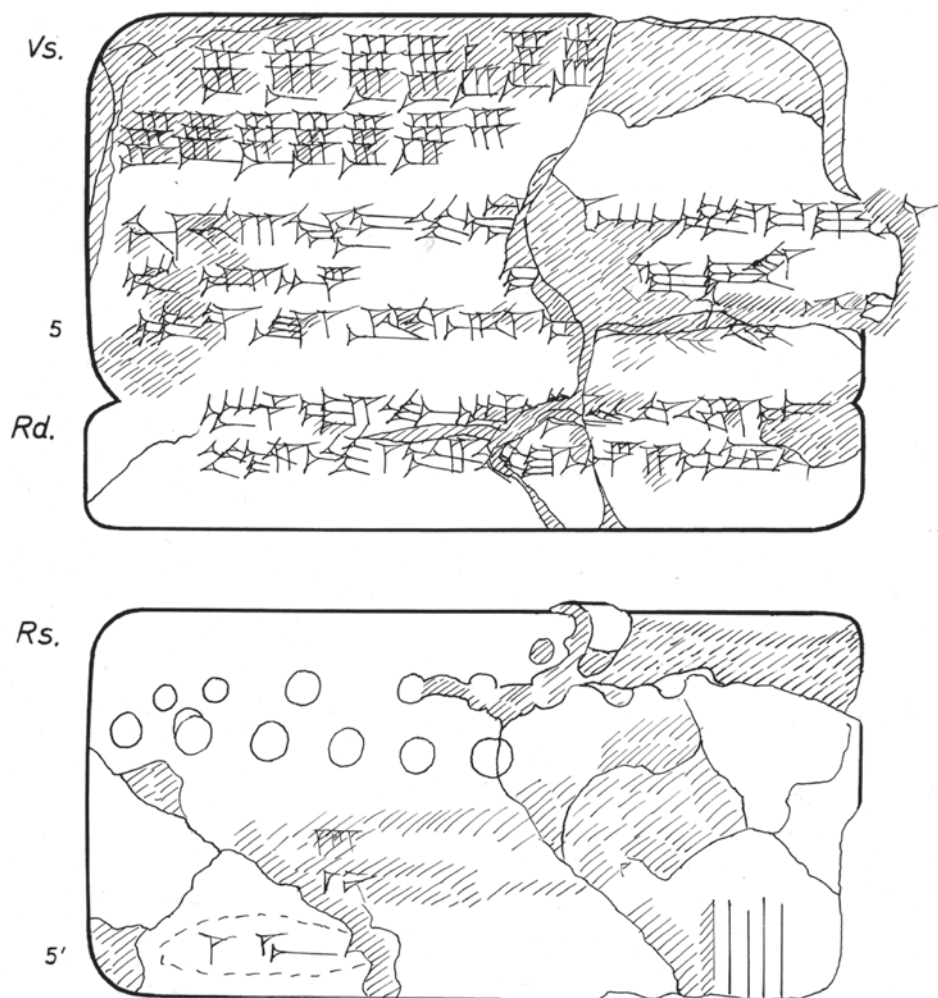


Figure 4.7. Tally of incoming grain (MARV 7.46). © H. Freydank. For photo see Maul 2013, 567.

to embrace modern *Hit* on the Middle Euphrates can now be abolished thanks to the emergence of an alternative *Idu* on the eastern frontier.²⁸

If we look at the attestations for provinces outside the Offerings Archive there are some interesting differences. Several of the provinces listed in MARV 2.21 are virtually unknown outside these lists, whereas some provinces well attested in other contexts do not feature here. There may be political reasons for this: Amimu, Sahlala, *Harbu*, Tuttul and Naḥur are all in

²⁸ See Van Soldt 2008 for a proposal to locate Middle Assyrian *Idu* at the village of Sata Qala on the Lower Zab east of Arbīl and Kerkuk, on the basis of inscribed bricks from there. My thanks to Dr Daisuke Shibata for alerting me to this article (cf. also Ahmed 2010, p. 5), and for the information that the location of Kulišhinaš at the site of Tell 'Amuda now seems unlikely (pace Maul 2004, 130).

the north-west, and the texts which mention them belong to the late 13th century.²⁹ Some are small places, and it is possible that either they did not survive long as full provinces but were subsumed under a larger centre (e.g. the Upper Province, or Uššukanni), or that they had already fallen away from Assyrian control during the 12th century. MARV 3.40 (Freydank 1992a No. 6, early 12th century³⁰) mentions the “province of Ili-pada”, which is perhaps out west on the Baliḥ, including Tell Sabi Abyad, but does not feature in any of the tabulated lists. Another complication is the possibility of new provinces added to the list during the reign of Tiglath-pileser.³¹

How in practical terms do we imagine these deliveries were made by the provinces? Some of the texts have the appearance of having been written on location, with amounts jotted down roughly at the top of the tablet and a hasty text scrawled beneath (e.g. Figure 4.7).³² Rather as today we often use four verticals crossed by a fifth line to record groups of five, the tally is made by forming the figure 9 with the usual three tiers of three wedges, and then placing a tenth wedge horizontally across the base.³³ In other cases untidy layout or scribal inconsistencies may well reflect a tablet hastily inscribed as the commodities are recorded (e.g. texts which omit the URU or KUR determinative before the province names like MARV 8.40, or MARV 7.8, which has made an attempt at tabulation but is obviously hastily written). These will then be the primary record of a delivery, later to be incorporated into the office’s accounts.

We are not told much about the people bringing the contributions. In MARV 6.88, the stewards (AGRIG) of the governor of Kalḫu and of Ili-pada (a well-known VIP but his current position not stated),³⁴ and at least six boatmen are involved (ll. 5, 23), though it is not entirely clear if here they are delivering or not. Similarly MARV 5.5, which lists the backlog of offerings payments from a previous year, involves persons such as a boatman (l. 18), a mayor (l. 5) and a village inspector (l. 28), all with duties outside the city of Aššur. This text mentions receipts or payments (it is not clear which) called *tarkubtu*, which I assume refers to loading and is a charge associated with the boat transport. The city of Aššur and its temple sat on the west bank of the Tigris, and in many cases a boat would have been the best mode of transport for the sometimes considerable volume of commodities delivered. Boatmen (*malāḫu*) are

²⁹ See conveniently Jakob 2003, 111–17 for these (and other) provinces.

³⁰ Eponym Adad-riba: Aššur-nirari III/Enlil-kudurri-ušur, 1202–1192 (Freydank 1991d, 188).

³¹ For Ili-pada see footnote 34. Two towns called Adarrašku and Tu[...] are listed delivering fruit under the heading “provinces” (*paḫātu*) in MARV 5.20 (probably Tiglath-pileser I). Adarrašku is probably mentioned in an annalistic text as a town in the north-eastern mountains conquered by Aššur-bel-kala (see Nashef 1982, 30 s.v. Amuraška’), but we have no mention of it elsewhere as a province.

³² MARV 7.46; cf. MARV 5.57; 7.22; 7.61; 8.13; 8.27; 8.30; 9.16. Note that in MARV 7.46 the combination of the tallies and the subsequent total demonstrates that the 5 *sūtu* measure, which is used frequently (and perhaps exclusively) in this Offerings Archive, was physically used to record incoming deliveries (see p. 129). The same goes for MARV 9.16 (160 marks and 80 homers), whereas in MARV 8.27 there are 72 marks and the total is 72 homers, which suggests that the scribe was counting in complete homers, whatever the capacity of the measuring vessel.

³³ Two new instances of the tally system written on unusually shaped tablets are published as MARV 10.86 (round) and 88 (horizontal).

³⁴ For Ili-pada see for example Jakob 2003, 56–63; Wiggermann 2006; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999b; he is sufficiently well known for his title to be unnecessary, which is inconvenient for us because we don’t know whether he is here acting as a provincial governor, or in his presumably later role as the Chief Chancellor (*sukkallu rabiu*).

involved in grain transport in other contexts, for example MARV 2.20 (cf. Jakob 2003, 505), or MARV 8.51 from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, where 20 homers of grain had been floated downstream,³⁵ and they are often mentioned in the Offerings Archive (e.g. MARV 1.56 [cf. Jakob 2003, 504]; 3.36; 5.57). MARV 9.95 from the time of Izbu-lešir lists as many as 23 boatmen with the grain they delivered or failed to deliver (*a-di maḥ-ri ù LÁ.MEŠ*). The frequent recurrence of the same names, especially Himsateya, associated with consignments from different provinces, indicates that he and some at least of his colleagues were regularly employed by the Offerings House, rather than by the individual provincial governors.

However, not all provinces had direct access to the Tigris, so while it is easy to imagine that the deliveries from Kalḫu, Nineveh, or even Arbail and Kilizu, would normally arrive by water, it is less easy to be sure of the position with provinces further west: Did they send their contributions overland on donkey back? Or is this quite the wrong question? Perhaps we do not need to assume that each province's contributions actually came from the province itself: whether we see the contribution as a personal obligation of the provincial governor himself, or a duty of the population as a whole, it may well have been easier and cheaper to arrange for the contributions in kind to be delivered from nearer to Aššur, from a province which had easier access to the river.³⁶ On the other hand, there is a reference to sesame for a *ginā'u* offering in a tablet from Tell Chuera, far from any river,³⁷ and at Durkatlimmu about the same time a *ginā'u* is mentioned in connection with Dayyan-bel-Ekur, a high official attested at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (cf. p. 29):³⁸ these may well refer to the Aššur Temple contributions at the time of Tukulti-Ninurta and therefore be earlier than our other evidence, but it is hard to be certain that the term *ginā'u* was exclusive to the national shrine at Aššur and not used for other temples.

There is nothing in the texts to indicate what kind of boats were used, or what their individual capacity might have been. It is possible that they were no more than *keleks*, the poplar rafts supported on inflated skins described by Herodotus and Layard, among many others, and operating on the Tigris into the 20th century AD; but they may equally have been wooden boats.³⁹ Because Aššur is effectively the southernmost of almost all the places in question, the boats were presumably bringing contributions downstream down the Tigris,⁴⁰ and one may imagine, for instance, that many of the provinces could have arranged for their contributions to be ferried downstream from Nineveh or Kalḫu whether or not they originated in the individual provinces. It is a commonplace among modern historians of Assyria to attribute the shift of the centre of gravity of the Assyrian state from Aššur to the region of Kalḫu and Nineveh in the first millennium to the greater agricultural potential of the provinces further

³⁵ l. 5: *iq-qa-al-pu-ú-ni*.

³⁶ Jakob notes boatmen associated with Apku, Durkatlimmu, Kalḫu, the Lower Province, Talmuššu, Tille and Turšan (2003, 501–2). Most of these towns lay on or close to a river, though probably not Apku.

³⁷ Jakob 2009, No. 29.

³⁸ Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 12:36.

³⁹ The mention of “boat travel” (*ta-lu-uk* GIŠ.MÁ.MEŠ) in MARV 6.34:15 is unfortunately obscure due to the broken context.

⁴⁰ With the exception of Idu and Turšan, which we may guess used the Lower Zab, joining the Tigris south of Aššur.

north, and to the scarcity of usable land in the immediate vicinity of Aššur. It is also conceivable that there was no presumption that even the barley or sesame derived from the named province, and that each provincial administration merely sourced its contributions from the part of the kingdom best able to supply it. Yet this may not have been a serious issue, given that the amounts in question are not vast.

Occasionally a contributor found it necessary to write directly to the Offerings Overseer. MARV 2.8 is one such letter: Šamaš-abi-edi informs Izbu-lešir that he has arranged for ẖuradaya the boatman to deliver 6 homers of sesame as a fixed offering.⁴¹ He addresses Izbu-lešir as “my lord” and calls himself “your servant”, which may mean that his rank was below that of provincial governor. The same applies to KAJ 302 (VAT 15437), written by Šilliya, with the formulaic introduction “I have done obeisance, I have gone as a substitute for my lord”: he lists 50 homers of grain plus some honey and some sesame, which “I have loaded onto the boat of ẖimsateya”. At the end of the letter he adds that he has sent some wine and two sheep “for (*ana* UGU) my lord”, and it is easy to see that this represents a personal tribute intended to curry favour or requite a previous obligation, rather than a part of the formal offerings regime.⁴² It seems quite possible that this actual tablet was intended for delivery by the hand of the boatman himself along with the goods.

The annual accounts allow us to make a number of helpful generalisations. They indicate that the system remained much the same for several decades, perhaps more than a century from early in the 12th century to early in the 11th century. During this time not only the categories of contribution but the order in which the provinces are listed remained almost constant.⁴³ From the frequent blank boxes in the texts, we may deduce that not all provinces succeeded every year in making a contribution under each of the four headings. As yet we do not know if that is always a default (*muṭṭā'u*), since it is possible it was not invariably expected, but there are cases, as we shall see, where if one kind of contribution was lacking it could be made up for by a different commodity.

Unless we have fundamentally misunderstood, they also tell us the total annual contribution of each province, and of them all put together. Pedersén wrote: “There is great variation of deliveries from province to province and also to some extent from year to year.... One may calculate from the available texts that during a ‘normal’ year, at the time of Tiglath-Pileser I, the total amount of *ginā'u* offerings received at the Aššur temple was about 1,000 homer (c. 100 m³) corn, 10 homer (c. 1 m³) honey, 100 homer (c. 10 m³) sesame and 50 homer (c. 5 m³) fruit” (1985, 47). This can be broadly illustrated with two examples cited by Freydank 1997b, 47 and by the figures from MARV 2.21 (Table 4.3).

There are plenty more figures, though not many definitive totals, which could be extracted from the other annual account texts; but the broad proportions as presented by Pedersén would probably not be seriously undermined: for each homer (100 l.) of honey, one might

⁴¹ He then goes into technical detail about how the volume was measured, on which see Postgate 2013b.

⁴² Cf. the sheep in Freydank 1992a, Nos. 10 and 11; in MARV 10.90, a letter addressed to Aba-la-ide, one of Izbu-lešir's predecessors in office, the unusual contribution of nine sheep “of the fixed offerings” (*ša gi-na-e*) is accompanied by “1 sheep, your audience-gift (*na-mur-ta-ka*)”, reflecting the same practice.

⁴³ For earlier examples of similar province lists see footnote 26.

Table 4.3. *Annual total offerings receipts in homers: Pedersén's approximate calculation, and three of the tabulated accounts.*

		<i>Grain</i>	<i>Honey</i>	<i>Sesame</i>	<i>Fruit</i>
Pedersén 1985		1000	10	100	50
MARV 5.67	VAT 15487	780.8	10.56	71.2	50.4
MARV 5.14	VAT 19198	1408.9	7.12	~60	~50
MARV 2.21	VAT 18066	1300(+)	~11.2	100.57	46.66(+)

expect 5 homers of fruit, 10 of sesame and 100 of grain. While the entries in individual texts make it clear that the contributors often failed to meet their targets, and the proportions are not remotely rigidly maintained, the orders of magnitude need not be doubted.

If then we take as a rough estimate that the Offerings House received about 1,000 homers of grain annually, we may consider how many mouths this might have fed. If it all went into a grain ration to adult males, for which a norm of 1 *qû* daily seems to be the Middle Assyrian standard,⁴⁴ and like the scribes we assume a year of 360 days (12 30-day months) requiring 3.6 homers per person annually, the 1,000 homers would feed 278 men for the year. This is of course not what happened: the grain was not primarily issued as rations, but transferred to the food processors for conversion into bread and beer. Nevertheless, it must bear some relationship to the demand from consumers within the temple, whether they were the permanent administrative staff, food processors, menial employees, cultic personnel or the general public. We have no reliable way of determining the numbers dependent on the temple in any of these categories, nor do we know what other resources the temple administration could tap for their subsistence. The quantities are not negligible, and clearly could have gone a long way towards feeding the permanent staff of the temple, but they need not have constituted a significant burden on each provincial administration. Note for instance that MARV 5.83 (cf. Freydank 1997a, 130-3) deals with annual quantities of grain amounting to 4,500 to 4,700 homers, while provincial governors in the Ḫabur district were required on a single occasion to issue from the local palace 716.3 homers of grain to provide rations for deportees.⁴⁵ We may conclude that the offerings amounts, although not minimal, are nonetheless commensurate with a system of symbolic contributions, rather than a core component of the state economy.

None of these texts appears to give advance quotas or estimates of what any province was expected to pay, but the recurrence of different exact amounts for different provinces across the years⁴⁶ indicates that as we would expect there must have been preordained quotas for

⁴⁴ See for example Jakob 2003, 148. The daily rate of 1 *qû* (traditionally ~0.84 litres) agrees fairly reassuringly with modern estimates suggesting 0.6 kg as the daily need of an adult male (see discussion of different estimates in Seeher 2000, 294).

⁴⁵ KAJ 113, edited in Postgate 1988a, 71-4.

⁴⁶ For example amounts identical to those listed in MARV 2.21 can be found in MARV 5.42 and MARV 9.12, tabulated accounts from three different *limmu* years.

each province, with larger amounts expected from the more populous provinces. At first sight there is no sign of seasonal variation, but the Middle Assyrian calendar makes it hard to be certain of this. There is also a curious preference for multiples of eleven: in MARV 2.21 (Table 4.2) see for instance the entries for Idu (0.77 honey, 7.7 sesame), Taidu (0.88 honey, 8.8 sesame), Kulišhinaš (0.33 honey, 3.3 sesame, 3.3 fruit) and the City of Aššur (0.88 honey, 8.8 sesame). The only explanation for this which comes to mind is that there may have been a monthly quota which was only required in 11 of the 12 months of a year, leaving each province 1 month of grace, but more thorough investigation of the phenomenon might yield other solutions.

The Contribution of the Assyrians

In the tabulated accounts, as already mentioned, and also in other tablets recording single or multiple deliveries, the offerings are sometimes described generically as “fixed offerings of the provinces”, suggesting that they formed a class of their own, but we rarely hear of contributions from any other institutions or individuals. The only exception is the “contribution of the Assyrians” (*maddattu ša aššurāyē*). The term *maddattu* is only rarely used for other contributions to the Offerings House.⁴⁷ Very familiar in Assyrian royal annals of the first millennium, and from the reign of Tiglath-pileser I, as the generic word for the regular annual payment of tribute imposed on states recognising Assyrian supremacy, it would be a mistake to assume that it only refers to such contributions – indeed the annalists sometimes give *maddattu* this more precise connotation by qualifying it with a phrase like “the annual gift of my overlordship”. In Middle Assyrian documents, instances of its use in a different context include “he has drawn up accounts with his contribution”, in the context of military service,⁴⁸ and a list of 134 sheep and goats both from individuals and from the inhabitants of places like Katmuḫu and Arinna, described as “the contribution of [...]”.⁴⁹ It is safest to treat these occurrences as matching the neutral usage of the verb *tadānu* to refer to the transfer of possession (without necessarily implying that it was either a free will gift or a payment). The Offerings Archive has now supplied us with several further instances of the word in a variety of contexts, and on at least four occasions we read of deliveries of grain coming into the Offerings House as the “contribution of the Assyrians”.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ One instance is the unique text MARV 6.39 as edited in Freydank 2007, 71–2, which if correctly deciphered reads: ŠU.NIGIN 2 ANŠE 4BÁN LĀL *ma-da-tu ša LÜ.MEŠ* ^{umu}*pa-ru-na-ie-e a-na gi-na-e ša* ^a*a-šur ša URU.ŠA.URU ša 4 MU.MEŠ* ^{1d}*U.GUR-NÍG.BA LÜ.DUB.SA[R] ša Ê* *[t]up-pa-a-te ma-ḫi-ir* (“Total: 2.4 homers of honey, contribution of the men of Paruna for the fixed offerings of the House of Aššur of the Inner City for four years, Nergal-iqiša, the scribe of the Tablet House, has received.”)

⁴⁸ KAJ 307:6 NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ *iš-tu ma-da-te-šu iṣ-ša-bat* (see, p. 23).

⁴⁹ KAJ 314:9; some of these contributors may indeed have been subject polities, justifying a translation of “tribute”, but not all.

⁵⁰ MARV 6.35:47–8: *ša ma-ad-da-a-te ša áš-šu-ra-ie-e ... in-na-kal* – (bread and beer) “of the contribution of the Assyrians ... shall be consumed”; MARV 5.70:18: “(grain) which (as) bread and beer was consumed from out of the grain of the contribution(s)” (ⁱ*ina* (or ^{ša}*a*?) ŠA¹ ŠE-*im*.MEŠ *ša ma-da-te in-na-kil-ú-ni*); MARV 7.3:4 refers to a payment of 5 homers of grain “which was imposed on Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer, instead of the grain of the contribution

There are two issues here which need resolution: the precise connotation of “Assyrian” and the precise status of the contributions. These appear normally to be in grain, for conversion into bread and beer, but in one instance a delivery (of oil?) is described as “instead of the honey of the Assyrians”, so that the substances they provide are in agreement with the other fixed offerings.⁵¹ This also agrees with the first section of MARV 1.49 quoted here:

[iš-tu ITI] ^dsin UD.18.KÁM li-mi
[¹dGIŠ.KU–DUMU.Ú]S–é-šár-ra MAN KUR a-šur
NÍG.K[A₉.MEŠ ¹]iz-bu–SI.ŠÁ GAL gi-na-e
9 ME 25 ANŠE 3 qa ŠE-im^{meš} ša ma-da-te
[š]a áš-šu-ra-ie-e^{m[es]} ša pi-i ki-šir-te
ša NA₄.KIŠIB ¹aš-šur–ki-ti–še-ši GAR KUR
ša-ab-tu

[From the month] of Sin, 18th day, eponymate
[of Tiglath-pil]eser, King of Assyria,
the acco[unts of] Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer,
(for) 925.03 homers of grain of the contribution
of the Assyrians, in accordance with the case-tablet
with the seal of Aššur-kitti-šeši, Governor
of the Land, have been drawn up.

MARV 1.49:1-7

This makes it clear that Izbu-lešir had previously taken delivery of this fairly large amount – comparable to the annual total for all provinces – and acknowledged his receipt in a document ratified by the “Governor of the Land” (on whom see p. 125). Further down, the same text explicitly mentions “fixed offerings”, and it is clear that the contributions of the “Assyrians” came to the Offerings House. It is therefore highly likely that they were themselves “fixed offerings” even if this is not 100 per cent proven.

The other issue concerns the term *aššurāyu*. It is hard to translate other than by “Assyrian”, but in this context it is very unclear what this really means.⁵² We have at least four possibilities from which to choose:

1. subjects of the Assyrian state, regardless of any ethnic or geographical affiliations:
2. subjects of the Assyrian state with an ethnic or geographical claim to be identified as “Assyrian” in contrast to others with different ethnic or geographical identities:
3. the population of a territorial unit named after the City of Aššur:
4. the population of the City of Aššur.

The easiest options would seem at first sight to be 3 or 4, but there are reasons this may be deceptive. In the first place, these two population groups already appear to be represented in the *gināu* lists (cf. Table 4.1), where we find both “The City of (the god) Aššur” (no. 7), and “The Inner City” (*libbi āli*, no. 15). How these two differ is not immediately obvious, but, to quote an earlier attempt at a solution, “I assume that *Libb(i)-āli* can only refer to the city

of the Assyrians” (*ki-mu ŠE-im.MEŠ ša ma-da-at-te ša áš-šu-ra-ie.MEŠ*); MARV 1.49:8–9. In MARV 5.70 and 6.73 (see next footnote), I have assumed that the “contribution” (*ma-da-(at-)te*) is from the “Assyrians”, although this is not explicitly stated.

⁵¹ MARV 5.8:64. It may also be their contribution that is referred to in MARV 6.73:17–18, where a combination of barley, another grain, wheat and bulgur is issued to the “bakers and brewers of the House of Aššur and the palace as the first instalments of the contribution, in order to make bread (and) beer” (*a-na re-ša-te ša ma-da-at-te ana NINDA.MEŠ KAŠ.MEŠ e-pa-še*). The term *rēšāte* in the first millennium refers to the offering of first fruits, but it may have a more general meaning here. (The passage MARV 7.96:4–5, reading *ša ŠÁ ŠE-im.MEŠ ša ma-da-te ša nu³ za³ x³ dē-a-MAN*, remains obscure to me).

⁵² For the term *Assyrian* and its possible social implications, see pp. 12–14.

of Assur itself”, while the apparent “City of Assur” may reflect “a usage such as *māt/pāḥat āl-Aššur* ‘the province of the city of Assur’, administratively separated from the city of Assur”,⁵³ given that “province” is not repeated in front of each toponym in these lists. Indeed, Urad-Šerua’s brother-in-law Aššur-bel-ilani (see p. 240) served as “governor of the City of Aššur”, a different office from “Governor of the Land” (*šakin māti*) traditionally seen as the governor of Aššur’s provincial territory. It cannot be coincidental that each time the name Aššur is entered in the lists the logogram URU is included, and a similar consistency in the inclusion of the URU can be observed in KAV 217, where we must I think conclude that a “citizen of the city of Aššur” was referred to as *āl-Aššurāyu* (cf. p. 13). By contrast, the contexts referring to the “*maddattu* of the Assyrians” conspicuously lack the URU, as do mentions of “Assyrians” in other texts, including the Middle Assyrian Laws (see p. 13). The Assyrians themselves must have needed to differentiate inhabitants of the city of Aššur from subjects of the Assyrian state, and since we do not in these texts meet any writing implying a form like *māt-Aššurāyu*, I think we must conclude that the city inhabitants were indeed known as *āl-Aššurāyu*, and that plain *Aššurāyu* means “Assyrian” as in meaning 2, since the scribes regularly also refer to ethnic groups who are evidently Assyrian subjects with their own ethnonyms such as “Elamites”, “Šubrians” or “Kassites”.

On balance, therefore, it seems that these contributions came from individual Assyrian subjects of the state, but we do not have enough evidence to see whether these were exclusively within the “home province” or distributed across the different provinces. I have seen no sign in the texts hitherto published that the scribes took deliveries from individual “Assyrian nationals”, but it does not seem unlikely that they should contribute as a symbolic act to the temple’s daily offerings needs, separately from the institutional fixed offerings required from the provinces.

The Offerings House and its Storage Facilities

The evidence of the boatman tablets suggests that the majority of the offerings contributions were logged into the Offerings Office on the quayside, and then transferred to some form of temporary or permanent storage. No doubt Izbu-lešir operated from within the overall precincts of the Aššur Temple itself, and his particular sector of the complex, along the south-west side of the southern courtyard, was probably known as the “Offerings House” (*bēt gināē*), where modest quantities of grain are occasionally said to have been “received”.⁵⁴ Once, the governor of Ḫalahḫu is required to bring his previous year’s offerings deficit of 4.4 homers sesame and 1.1 homer of fruit and “measure it out in the Offerings House”.⁵⁵ MARV 7.5 and 7.28 are both damaged, but their mention of the word *pūḫu* in the same context as the *bēt gināē* suggests that loans (commodity uncertain) were sometimes issued from there.

It is difficult to be certain whether the phrase *bēt gināē* refers to a specific architectural unit, or only more abstractly to the institution. The same problem does not affect two

⁵³ Postgate 1985, 98.

⁵⁴ For example MARV 6.8:8 (6 homers); 6.12:8 (4 homers); also 6.34:14 (8+ homers); 7.36:9 (30 homers).

⁵⁵ MARV 7.71:6–8, reading <ú->*ba-la i+na Ê gi-na-e i-ma-da-ad*.

technical words for storage facilities. Of these the more general term is *nakkamtu* or *bēt nakkamti* which is occasionally mentioned as the location or source of commodities.⁵⁶ Thus 2 and 6 homers of grain were received by Mušezib-Sin on consecutive days “in the storehouse, from the charge of Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer” (MARV 7.53), while 193.2 homers of grain and 8.5 homers of flour in the charge of Aššur-baissunu were deposited in the storehouse (*ina bēt nakkamti tabkūni*, MARV 9.112:14). This is probably the “storehouse of the House of Aššur” mentioned in MARV 6.42, and also the same as the storehouse in which was kept “the *sūtu* (measure) of the god’s rations”.⁵⁷ Storehouses of course were not exclusively intended for cereals. Sesame was deposited in a storehouse “[inside(?)] the wall” in MARV 3.9, and alum is mentioned in a palace storehouse in MARV 8.67 (probably from the Stewards’ Archive), while a wide variety of goods was kept in the storerooms of Babu-aḫa-iddina.

The other storage facility is the *bēt ḥašīmi*, which specifically means a granary. A text detailing about 45 homers of grain received by brewers and bakers “as their offerings” specifies that it is “the grain of the granary of the courtyard”.⁵⁸ A group of at least six closely related texts records loans taken from the “granary of the Governor of the Land” along with other sources.⁵⁹ Other amounts of grain are taken in these same texts from “the granary of the house of Ašri-ili” in MARV 7.89, while they come simply from “the House of Samnuḫa-ašared” in 5.41, 5.44, 7.76 and 9.112. Whether the Offerings House itself had its own separate granary remains unknown, and although the source of the grain is sometimes specified, in the Offerings Archive texts which record the deposit of commodities in a store place are scarce (MARV 9.112 being a rare instance). Perhaps from an accountant’s point of view it was normally only the arrival of the commodities into the institution of the Offerings House that was significant, whichever department they may physically have entered. We have no way of telling whether either the (*bēt*) *nakkamti* or the *bēt ḥašīmi* of the Offerings House were physically incorporated in the same building as Room 3’ where the tablets were kept, or, as seems equally likely, at some distance elsewhere in the city.⁶⁰

The Commodities and Their Processers

On their arrival, the Offerings Overseer technically “received” (*maḫir*) the commodities, and then supervised their onward distribution to different branches of his establishment.

⁵⁶ There is grammatical reason to believe that the *Ē* in front of many occurrences of *nakkamtu* should be taken as a determinative (as also perhaps with *karmu*, cf. Llop 2005a, 43) but instinct suggests that it may also have featured as *bēt nakkamti*.

⁵⁷ GIŠ.BÁN *ša* ŠUKU DINGIR *ša* *Ē na-kám-te* MARV 3.50:5; more succinctly called the “the *sūtu* (measure) of the storeroom” (used for grain measurement in MARV 5.51:2, 9, 13).

⁵⁸ MARV 7.86:15–16: ŠE-um *ša* *Ē ḥa-ši-mi* *ša* *Ē ki-sa-al-li* (unclear if the *Ē* is a determinative or the phrase should read “of the courtyard house”). A grain storage text edited in Freydank 1994a describes the issue of “397 homers of old grain of the eponymate of PN, dug out from the granaries” (*iš-tu* *Ē ḥa-ši-ma-te ḥa-aṭ-ṭa*, MARV 3.4 Rs.2’-3’, p. 21).

⁵⁹ See footnote 14.

⁶⁰ The Offerings Archive has no certain reference to the grain storage facility known as *karmu*, for which see Llop 2005a; Llop in Faist & Llop 2012. On the other two terms see also Jakob 2003, 320–7.

Different specialists processed different commodities, and in our discussion we will follow the order of the tabulated accounts, which begin with the cereals.

Cereals

By volume, the cereals comprised the great majority of all the contributions. Perhaps unsurprisingly, most of the preserved documentation from the Offerings Archive is concerned with grain and its processing. The majority of the cereal contributions are barley (written ŠE-*um*^{meš}, also ŠE-*am*^{meš} and ŠE-*im*^{meš}).⁶¹ Not infrequently this may be accompanied or replaced by wheat (GIG(.MEŠ)). Emmer (*kunāšu*), although occasionally mentioned in Middle Assyrian texts (Jakob 2003, 315), does not feature here, nor does millet (*tuḥnu*). Another cereal product listed occasionally is (ŠE) *ḥašlāte* “crushed (grain)”, which is generally assumed to be cracked grain or similar, like modern bulgur / burghul, though it is hard to know if it is made from barley or emmer.⁶²

Two professions are in charge of processing the cereals: the baker (*alahḫinu*) and the brewer. In these texts they are often mentioned together as a pair,⁶³ and once explicitly as “the bakers and brewers of the House of [Ašš]ur”.⁶⁴ They must therefore be considered as on the staff of the Aššur Temple, although this need not mean they are administratively under the Offerings House; during the mid 12th century there was a “House of the Bakers of the Temple” at Aššur to which five sheep were entrusted.⁶⁵ Jakob cites occurrences of the “House of the Bakers” alongside the “House of the Brewers”, and, on one occasion, the “House of the Brewers and Bakers”.⁶⁶ The coupling of the two professions is paralleled by mentions of “bread (and) beer” as a linked pair, seeming to emphasise that they belong in the same administrative context.⁶⁷ Although for convenience *alahḫinu* is often translated here as “baker”, this is slightly inaccurate, as shown by VAT 13076, discussed in Jakob (2003, 393) and now published as MARV 9.110:12, where a proper “baker” (*āpi'u*) or “bakers” is/are mentioned alongside one or more *alahḫinu* as receiving “white grain for the bread of the invocation of the god”.⁶⁸ From our archive it is clear that the *alahḫinu* was responsible for other stages of processing cereals,

⁶¹ The Akkadian word remains uncertain, in Assyrian as in Babylonian. Note the syllabic writing NINDA *uṭ-ti-te* MARV 8.7:1,3,5,6.

⁶² It goes to the bakers, for example. in MARV 5.11; 5.23; 5.25 (as *iškāru*); 5.48; 5.68; 6.33; 6.60 (broken). In MARV 6.73:9, cf. 11, 14 it is issued to the brewers and bakers along with barley and wheat. It also features in secular administrative contexts such as MARV 1.9, where it comes after barley and wheat and before *kurmišu*, *kudimmu* and sesame in the lists of provisions for the army from Zamban on the Diyala (Freydank 1974a). Similarly, in the Tukulti-Ninurta edict MARV 4.151:16, *ḥašlāte* is listed as a typical cereal product after barley and wheat.

⁶³ As noted already in Pedersén 1985, 45¹¹; Jakob 2003, 394. Examples: “bakers and brewers” MARV 6.19:15; 6.24:14; 6.69:13; 6.73:15; 6.81:4–5; “brewers and bakers” MARV 7.86.

⁶⁴ MARV 7.91 Rs. 5': LÜ *a-laḫ-ḫi-ni* ù LÜ.ŠIM.MEŠ É ^d[a]-šur; the “bakers of the House of Aššur” mentioned in MARV 7.56:18 include Aḫu-lamur, Aššur-šuma-iddina and Mar-šilliya from the regulars (see footnote 69).

⁶⁵ *a-na* É ^{lu}*a-lāḫ-ḫi-ni*^{meš} *ša* É DINGIR *pa-aq-du* Donbaz 1976, 24, A.1750.

⁶⁶ Jakob 2003, 394.

⁶⁷ For the couplet NINDA.MEŠ (*u*) KAŠ.MEŠ cf. for example KAJ 306a; MARV 1.49:8–9; 2.14:13, rev. 10; 5.70:17; 6.19:15; 6.35:7; 7.4:25; cf. 4 ŠILA NINDA.MEŠ 6 ŠILA KAŠ.MEŠ MARV 7.87:4.

⁶⁸ PAB 1 ANŠE 8BÁN ŠE BABBAR-ú ^{lu}*a-lāḫ-ḫi-nu* ù ^{lu}*a-pi-ú* *a-na* NINDA.MEŠ *ša si-si-it* DINGIR. A real baker (*āpi'u*) is also mentioned in MARV 4.1:17 and at Durkatlimmu (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 12:33).

principally the conversion to flour. This is why the term is sometimes translated as “miller”, but there were others who did the actual grinding, and an accurate but unwieldy interpretation of the *alahhinu*’s role would seem to be along the lines of “preparer of farinaceous products” or “flour-processor” (though for convenience “baker” will often be used here). At the time of Izbu-lešir, there was a limited number of *alahhinu*, whose names keep recurring together in the records, either singly or in groups.⁶⁹ There is no mention in the Offerings Archive of a “chief baker” (*rab alahhini*), although this title is once attested in the Stewards’ Archive.⁷⁰ Each *alahhinu* takes individual liability for the amount received, and these are often equal quantities (e.g. MARV 5.6), so that they seem to operate like a group of equally ranked colleagues. With less frequently recurring persons, identification as a baker may be uncertain, as they are sometimes listed together with the brewers without specifying each individual’s profession.

Grinders

The grain was presumably usually ground, unless destined for malting, and texts listing the issue of grindstones to *alahhinu* indicate that they were responsible for this, along with the brewers. It does not mean that they themselves did the grinding; this must have been the task of the workers called ^(la)*ṭé-i-nu*(.meš), etymologically the “grinders”. They are mentioned in MARV 6.48, where three well-known *alahhinu* (Šuzub-Sin, Urad-Gula and Aššur-danninanni) have each received a large quantity of grain (in two cases 223 or 224 homers – over 20,000 litres) for processing into a specified quantity of flour (ZÍD.DA.MEŠ) “together with the rations of his grinders” (*a-di ŠUKU-at ṭé-i-ni-šu*); this indicates that they were expected to take the rations of their workers from the amounts of grain allocated to them by the Offerings Overseer. It also places the grinders into a lower social status as recipients of rations: they may perhaps have been slaves, although this is not stated explicitly. A different angle is given by MARV 5.60, which has a list of 49 “grinders of the House of Aššur”, 47 of whom are associated with each of 25 different provinces in groups of one to four (similarly: MARV 6.64). It seems that part of the obligation of each province was to provide dependent labour for this purpose, and this appears to be confirmed by MARV 6.90: this is a sealed envelope receipt for 194.2 homers of grain from Kilizi province. It is ratified by Izbu-lešir, but a supplementary section records that Mar-šilliya, the baker, has received Šar-Adad, a grinder (*ṭa-i-nu*.meš!), also no doubt as part of the same province’s contribution.

Alongside the ^(la)*ṭé-i-nu*(.meš) a second category of grinders, called the *sāmidu*, is sometimes mentioned.⁷¹ They presumably produced the flour type *simdu*, and it seems from

⁶⁹ Some of the best attested bakers are Aḫu-lamur, Aššur-danninanni, Aššur-šuma-iddina, Kutahḫu, Mar-šilliya, Šuzub-Sin and Urad-Gula (see Jakob 2003, 387–90, citing texts which are mostly published now in MARV 5–8, alongside further instances). Note that Šuzub-Sin is once listed as the father of Aššur-šuma-iddina (MARV 6.81:8), and Kutahḫu is also mentioned once as a father (MARV 5.41:12).

⁷⁰ Jakob 2003, 387 citing Pedersén 1985, 73. Such a post might have been needed within the secular palace administration.

⁷¹ See for example MARV 1.49, an excerpt edited in Jakob 2003, 385; MARV 6.39:7; MARV 7.4.

MARV 3.69 that there were different types of grindstone classified as either *sāmidu* or *ṭēinu*, presumably “fine grinding” and “coarse grinding”, for the different kinds of flour.⁷² While regular flour (ZÍD.DA = *qēmu*) is mentioned, from the instruction in a letter, “grind the grain into *simdu* flour and GAL.GAL.LA flour”, we see that at least two grades of flour were distinguished.⁷³ It may therefore be that the ordinary grinding process, described with the verb *ṭiānu*, is what yielded the ZÍD.GAL.GAL(.LA) to be understood as “coarse flour”. From MARV 3.16 we know that both these flour types were included in offerings to Aššur and his spouse Šerua.

Another type of flour is *mirqu*, a word from the same root as *marāqu*, meaning approximately “to crush”. On one occasion it seems to have been delivered as part of the fixed offerings of Kulišhinaš, although on the envelope the word *mirqu* is replaced by *aza[mru]* (“fruit”; MARV 1.73:2). In MARV 5.5:26-7, it also replaces some contribution (illegible to me), this time from Apku. It does seem possible that because of seasonality, provinces may have had difficulty in supplying fruit all year round (unlike grain, honey and sesame which do not need to be so fresh), and therefore another comestible could be substituted. This certainly seems to be the case in MARV 6.1, where several of the entries in the “fruit” (*azamru*) column are in fact flour (ZÍD.DA), possibly a generic term which might include *mirqu*. The mention of “figs” in this column (l. 20) may support this, because figs are regularly preserved dried (often on strings) and would not be so subject to seasonal fluctuation.⁷⁴

While it seems that flour could be presented unprocessed to the gods (e.g. MARV 3.16, rev. iii.10: 1 homer of *simdu* flour), their meals also included flour products of various kinds. The most elaborate evidence for this comes from MARV 3.16, which lists a wide range of specialist products, some known only here.⁷⁵ This tablet is not known to (and may well not) derive from the Offerings Archive, but in many of the documents which do we also come across types of bread including *tappinnu*,⁷⁶ and most frequently *miṭru*.⁷⁷ The product *ḥaršu*, which is only measured by volume (whereas *miṭru* for instance can be counted), may be “crumbled (bread)”; its production is no doubt referred to in MARV 6.77:5 “from (it) he will crumble(?)

⁷² See Jakob 2003, 385–6. Curiously, in MARV 3.69 most of the grindstones are issued “for their work-assignment” (l. 42) to brewers. At least one goes to an *alaḥḥinu*, but we would not have expected the brewers (who of course use malted grain) to be principally involved in grinding flour. At the end of the text there is a rather unexpected mention of EN.MEŠ *pa-ḥ[a-te]*; if by this is meant “provincial governors”, it may be another dimension of the provinces’ liabilities to support the Offerings House, but unfortunately the passage is too broken for certainty, and we cannot rule out the possibility that *bēl pāḥiti* is here used in a more general sense, such as “official responsible”.

⁷³ MARV 5.89 Ass. 14580, archival provenance not known. For ZÍD.GAL.GAL(.LA) see MARV 1.7:18 (a sack of it), and MARV 1.30:5 (a grindstone for it). Also at Tell Chuera (Jakob 2009). Now discussed in Llop 2010a, 61, referring to CAD P 111 for a possible Neo-Assyrian lexical equivalent *pappassu*, which would derive from the Middle Assyrian form *pappaltu* (for **pappastu*) attested in Postgate 1994a, 15 (from Pedersén’s archive M13, see Pedersén 1997a).

⁷⁴ Other instances of *mirqu* in the initial delivery phase are MARV 5.27 (in place of *azamru*?), 5.35 rev.7; 5.39:3, 12 (from Taidi and Amasaku); *mirqu* flour is also encountered at a later stage, in unclear contexts, in MARV 6.18 and MARV 6.40.

⁷⁵ Edited with a lengthy commentary in Llop 2010a.

⁷⁶ MARV 6.27; 7.57.

⁷⁷ For example MARV 5.32; 5.66; 6.27; 7.68; KAJ 306a. See Llop 2010a, 59 on this type of bread, but note that the writings *mi-ṭi-ri* (MARV 8.92:6) and NINDA *me-ṭi-ru* (Assur 3/ii No. 5:4–6, 10) point to an emphatic *ṭ* as the second consonant.

(*i-har-ra-áš*) 2 *qû* daily”; in MARV 5.66 it is differentiated from other breads as it appears in the sequence “bread, *haršu*, beer, oil, honey (and) fruit”.⁷⁸

The Brewers

The brewers (LÚ.ŠIM(.MEŠ) = *sirašû*), like the bakers with whom they are often listed, are likewise a group of recurring names. They were presumably principally engaged in making beer: MARV 5.26 is a daily note of the issue of 55 homers of grain, received by the brewers “for their malt” (*a-na ŠE.MUNU₄.MEŠ-šu-nu*), but aside from this we hear almost nothing of the brewing process. Beer does occasionally feature in the archive,⁷⁹ as the intended purpose of a grain issue, often paired with bread, as already mentioned. By itself it is mentioned either simply as “beer” (KAŠ.MEŠ) or as a variety called SA.MAR *ṭābu*.⁸⁰ In one 12th-century text a “chief brewer” withdraws 6 homers of grain as a loan from Aba-la-ide, the Offerings Overseer (MARV 3.39 = Freydank 1992a No. 4), but this title does not seem to recur in the Izbu-lešir texts. The evidence of the Tell Chuera texts, among others, indicates that brewers and their products were of great interest to the Assyrian administrators, and we can only assume that the divine cult, like secular institutions, consumed significant quantities of beer. One sealed tablet records that over a period of 47 days a brewer had dispensed amounts of beer “to the House of the God (and?) the palace,⁸¹ in accordance with a case-tablet bearing the seal of Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer” (see p. 117 on the presentation of offerings).

Honey⁸²

It seems likely that the essence of the obligation on the provinces was to ensure that the temple received the commodities prescribed by the needs of the cult, rather than to provide the raw materials from their own local produce. Clearly the majority of provinces in Assyrian territory could produce barley, and many of them sesame and some kind of fruit, but the same may not apply to the food called *dišpu*, which is generally translated as “honey”. The word could, in different times and places, refer either to bees’ honey or to date syrup (Arabic: *dibis*; see Faist 2001, 72; Volk 1999). On one hand it is true that evidence for beekeeping in Mesopotamia is scarce, on the other hand there is equally no reason to suppose that dates ripened or date syrup was produced in Assyria, although it is probable that in Babylonia *dišpu* would normally refer

⁷⁸ Jakob 2003, 397 on *haršu* as a kind of bread; note “1 *qû* bread for *haršu*” (MARV 5.32:1). Possible confusion with *huršu* makes it slightly uncertain whether in MARV 8.91:5 we have someone receiving 7 *sûtu* of sesame “for his *haršu*”, but I suspect so. See Llop 2010a, 66–8 for other references.

⁷⁹ For example 9BÁN KAŠ.MEŠ MARV 5.7:9ff.; 5.66:10; 5.70:17’.

⁸⁰ KAŠ SA.MAR *ṭa-(ab-)bu* (MARV 6.35:1, 44; 6.70:15, 17); this kind of “sweet SA.MAR beer” is perhaps of a high quality, since it is also included in issues to diplomatic travellers in the Tell Chuera texts, cf. Jakob 2003, 126 and Jakob 2009, Nos. 22–8, cf. p. 60 on No. 22:6, commenting that SA.MAR “ist sonst nicht nachzuweisen” (now outdated).

⁸¹ MARV 5.7:14–15 *a-na É DINGIR É.GAL-lim iš-qi-ú-ni*. This account was prepared by Aššur-danninanni, known from other texts as a baker (*alahḫinu*).

⁸² LĀL(.MEŠ) = *dišpu* (written *di-iš-pu* MARV 6.28:2). Measured in homers, *sûtu* and *qû*, and, like some oils and aromatics, for smaller quantities in little “cups” (*kāsāte*: for example 3 *qa* 4 *ka-si*.MEŠ-*te* MARV 7.34:2; cf. MARV 5.69; 5.77; 7.23).

to a date product. To judge from its logogram, DUḪ.LĀL, the substance *iškuru* must have been beeswax (because date syrup does not yield wax), and we know it was available in Assyria as it is mentioned as a component in the manufacture of writing-boards (on wax see Volk 1999, 286-90). It would no doubt have been a by-product of apiculture, and if importing wax, it is likely enough that honey came too. Outside the temple we find it mentioned in Babu-aḥa-iddina's Archive,⁸³ and reportedly T 98-92 from Sabi Abyad explicitly mentions the import of honey (Faist 2001, 129¹⁰⁸); if coming from the west, bees' honey is more likely than date syrup, a Babylonian product. Hence at the very least, it is unlikely to have been produced in every one of the 27 provinces, but may have had to be brought in for the purpose.

The total inflow of honey to the temple in a year seems to have been no more than about 10 homers – less than all the other commodities (see Table 4.2). It was probably correspondingly expensive, and this may be reflected in cases where it is measured in “cups”, perhaps one-fifth of a *qû*.⁸⁴ It was not always available: in MARV 3.36, Amasaki provided 6 *sûtu* of oil in place of honey. We don't know if the gods spread honey on their bread, but it is probable that honey was an ingredient in sweetmeats (*muttāqu*), which were included in their menus and must also have required flour products and sesame. MARV 3.49 and 8.88:3-7 indicate that, like fruit, honey fell under the remit of the *kakardinu* (translated “confectioner”, but responsible for a range of foods).

Sesame

It is clear from the tabulated annual accounts that significant quantities of sesame came into the Offerings House from the provinces. Sesame could be used either in its own right as a culinary ingredient or as a source of oil. Although we occasionally find sesame used in sweet cakes, most notably “sesame ziqqurrats” (see Figure 4.8),⁸⁵ the evidence of the Offerings Archive suggests that its principal use was for oil, which is usually referred to simply as IĀ(.MEŠ) = *šamnu*.⁸⁶

Documents recording individual deliveries⁸⁷ or issues of single consignments of sesame are relatively infrequent, and a good proportion belongs to the period of office of Sin-nadin-apli.

⁸³ KAJ 226; A. 1774 in Donbaz 1997, 107.

⁸⁴ MARV 7.34:2: 3 *qû* (and) 4 cups (3 *qa* 4 *ka-si*.MEŠ-*t[e]* *ša* LĀL.MEŠ). Like myrtle oil (MARV 4.146:20), honey was also measured or at least served in a larger bowl (*šapputu*); see 1 DUG *šap-pu-tu* *ša* LĀL *ma-li-t[u]* MARV 7.5:11, cf. rev. 2'-3' (*ša* LĀL *ma-al-'a-a-tu-ni* “which is full of honey”).

⁸⁵ In MARV 3.16, the sweet substance called *muttāqu* is made of sesame and used for making various items, including ziqqurrats of 1 *sûtu* (~10 l.) each (ii.6'); this agrees with MARV 1.33, where the oil presser is issued with 5 *sûtu* of sesame and charged with supplying four ziqqurrats of 1 *sûtu* each. For other Assyrian mentions see Llop-Radua 2010a, 64–5.

⁸⁶ The logogram IĀ.GIŠ is also found regularly in the 12th-century texts, and is probably also to be read simply as *šamnu*. It is to be distinguished from IĀ.DÜG.GA (*ša* KASKAL) “sweet oil (for travel)” (cf. CAD Š/i, 328), and probably from IĀ *be-e-ri* (both MARV 8.14:5–6). A list of disbursal (*talpittu*) of oils from the Stewards' Archive distinguished “myrtle oil” (IĀ *a-si*) and “purified oil” (IĀ *ma-su-û*); these were in the charge of a female perfumer (*muraqqîtu*) called Tukulti-ša-šame, and are therefore perhaps not regular sesame oil.

⁸⁷ Such as MARV 6.13 (4 homers from Kilizi via a boatman); 7.5 (0.15 homers from Katmuḫu, owed by a boatman); 7.9 (2.27 homers from Ḫalahḫu, and 7.14 from Talmuššu); MARV 7.71 (4.4 homers arrears owed by the governor of Ḫalahḫu); MARV 8.78 (9 homers from Šadikannu).



Figure 4.8. Middle Assyrian seal from Tyre, with sesame ziqurrats on an altar. Courtesy Dominique Collon.

To recover either the food product or the oil from the seeds required the services of the oil presser (LÚ.IÀ.SUR = *ṣāḥitu*) both to hull the sesame (yielding *šamaššammū ḫalṣūtu*) and to squeeze out (*ṣaḥātu*) the oil.⁸⁸ MARV 3.9:13-22 records a delivery of 6.7 homers received by Sin-nadin-apli from a boatman, “together with (some) sesame of the autumn (*ša ḫar-pi*) which was issued to Ibašši-ilu the oil presser to have consumed (*a-na šá-ku-li*)”. Ibašši-ilu is well attested as an oil presser in the Offerings Archive. Others who worked recurrently for the Offerings House were Mar-apie, who receives sesame as a work-assignment in MARV 5.9 and 7.78-9 (cf. also his accounts in MARV 7.32); and Siyatu, who signs a work contract to render pressed oil from 5 homers of sesame during the term of office of Sin-nadin-apli,⁸⁹ and in MARV 5.8 is listed as receiving 3 homers of sesame, in a long list of persons including priests and a diviner receiving relatively small amounts of oil on loan (*a-na pu-[hi]*, l. 1). In MARV 6.42 we hear of two sons, Adad-mušabši and Adad-apla-ušur, of a chief oil presser called Salmanu-iqiša, each of whom owes 1 homer of sesame. A small debt of sesame owed by Adad-mušabši to Sin-nadin-apli is documented in MARV 3.50 (Freydank 1992a No. 26), and another by Akuki in a similar debt-note to the same Offerings Overseer (MARV 7.92; cf. 6.87). Jakob comments that it is possible that they were not as regularly employed as the bakers and brewers and could have given their services elsewhere, but this must remain uncertain, as even regular members of the bakers’ and brewers’ groups could have work-assignment (*iškāru*) contracts with the Offerings House.

⁸⁸ See Jakob 2003, 408–11, especially for the letter from Sabi Abyad requesting that the sesame be hulled but not turned into oil.

⁸⁹ For Siyatu see Jakob 2003, 409–10; and MARV 8.60, where he withdraws 3 homers from Sin-nadin-apli “on the instructions of PN” (*a-na šipirte ša PN*).

Sesame oil was the normal oil in Assyria.⁹⁰ It had a variety of uses. Oil of some kinds could presumably be used in a culinary context. It was also used to anoint or libate, perhaps without further treatment, and as a base for perfume. Oil features in various contexts within the archive. In the archive Nos. 8, 13-15 and 30 are debt-notes for oil (IÀ.GIŠ): No. 8 records an oil presser's debt of 0.13 homers of oil to Offerings Overseer Aba-la-ide. No. 13 is a debt of oil to be brought along with the fixed offering from the provincial capital of Taidi. No. 14 is a debt-note for oil sealed by the priest (SANGA) of Adad, and No. 15 records a withdrawal of oil by a member of the House of Puḫunu for a *pandugani* ceremony (all in the career of the Offerings Overseer Sin-uballit). Unusually, a homer of oil is included in its offerings delivery along with sesame and *mirqu* flour by the city of Šadikanni (MARV 5.27), and in MARV 3.36 6 *sūtu* of oil is substituted for a consignment of honey, perhaps on a one-to-one basis, because the amount is one-eleventh of the amount of sesame listed, close to the honey-sesame ratio elsewhere (e.g. Table 4.2). Normally, though, we cannot be sure if the oil handed out reached the Offerings House already as oil, or was the result of processing sesame within the organisation. MARV 7.1 is a document which indicated how the complete receipts of sesame offerings from the provinces were converted into amounts of oil, and to whom that oil in turn was, or was to be, disposed of, but it does not indicate its purpose. MARV 5.8 probably recorded small amounts (measured in *qū* up to no more than 3 *sūtu*) of oil issued on loan to a variety of recipients. In MARV 7.10 (not certainly from the Offerings Archive), oil (IÀ.GIŠ) is listed together with aromatics such as myrtle (*āsu*), cypress (*šurmēnu*) and a "bitter" plant (*mar-rutu*). There is no explicit evidence for the preparation of aromatic oils in the Aššur Temple Archive, although two texts in the Steward's Archive record issues of oil to female perfumers (*muraqqītu*), and as mentioned in Chapter 3 there is a collection of technical instructions from Middle Assyrian Aššur on the subject (Ebeling 1950).

Generally when oil is used it is said to have been "poured".⁹¹ Thus MARV 6.31 is a record of oil "poured" before the gods, and l. 29 probably mentioned the receiving official [PN] *ša* UGU IÀ.MEŠ ("oil supervisor"). MARV 6.76:15 is similar, and KAJ 306a lists oil "completely poured in the (divine) presence".⁹² This record of amounts libated is evidently required to establish whether the full complement of offerings has been made: thus MARV 7.1 is a complex document which deals with 208.2 homers of sesame, "the complete offering of all the pr[ovinces]", and breaks this down into amounts of daily oil issues made and arrears not delivered. Some of these issues (ll. 12, 32) went to the palace (see pp. 126–7), others to one or more of the temples. MARV 7.73 may come from a similar smaller document. MARV 6.14 is an intriguing short text which records simply that "From 10th Kalmartu, eponymate of Ninurta-ašared, to 13th Muḫur-ilani, this same eponymate, 2 months and 13 days, the oil has been poured for the palace" – just that, no mention of any responsible official or the amounts involved. MARV 7.82, although badly broken, is similar, also recording oil libated for the palace over a specified time period.

⁹⁰ For oil at Nuzi see Schneider-Ludorff 1999, 407–8.

⁹¹ *tabik*, and in the case of multiple pourings, *tabbuk* (*ta-bu-uk*, MARV 2.22:3; cf. *šabbutu* for multiple tablets).

⁹² *ša-al-lu-um a-na IGI it-ta-ba-ak*.

Fruit (*azamru*)

Azamru is a generic noun meaning “fruit”, peculiar to the Assyrian dialect, and is always written syllabically. For the most part we can only guess which species of fruit were represented, but if it was expected throughout the year, it must have included some which either lasted well or yielded a good dried product. This certainly applies to figs, which are the only species as yet explicitly mentioned. In the fruit column of MARV 6.1:20 1.7 homers are listed, and in MARV 7.51:3, 2.4 homers of figs come from Addariq (near the Jebel Sinjar, a prime source for figs in modern Iraq), and are included in the total of “fruit” (*azamru*) in l. 9. During the period of office of Aba-la-ide, the mayor(?) of Nabula in the north also owed arrears of honey and figs (MARV 3.55 = Freydank 1992a No. 10). In MARV 3.32 (= Freydank 1992a No. 31) the Offerings Overseer issues 2 *sūtu* of “broken figs” to the mayor of Kilizi on the instructions of (*ana šipirte*) the governor. We can only guess which other species might have been included – perhaps apples, pomegranates, grapes or dates.⁹³

Fruit was not always available, and so in some texts we find a different product contributed “instead of fruit”. In the 12th century under Aba-la-ide two debt-notes were made out for 2.8 homers of grain and 2.5 homers of flour (ZĪD.DA), which were due for payment “instead of the fruit of the province of Ili-pada”.⁹⁴ Later, at least three provinces contributed flour in the fruit column of MARV 6.1 (eponym Ḫiyašayu, reign of Tiglath-pileser), and bread was accepted in place of fruit on two occasions listed in MARV 7.62:5,⁹⁵ while, as seen earlier, in a case-tablet in which Izbu-lešir receives offerings due from Kulišhinaš, 2.5 homers of fruit was probably replaced by the same volume of *mirqu* flour: the flour is mentioned on the tablet, whereas the envelope appears to have had *aza[mru]* (MARV 1.73).

The Confectioner (*kakardinnu*)

The *kakardinnu* (a word which in the first millennium becomes *karkadinnu*) is well known to be concerned with a variety of foodstuffs. Although the confectioners are mentioned alongside the oil pressers on the jar Ass. 18766 (see p. 91), they are rarely referred to in the currently published Offerings Archive. One is mentioned in MARV 6.1, a list of offerings deliveries, but unfortunately in a context which does not reveal which commodity he is handling. However, under Sin-uballiṭ the *kakardinnu* Bazu acknowledges receipt of 6 *qū* of honey (in accordance with an instruction from the Governor of the Land),⁹⁶ and another hint

⁹³ A consignment of 7 homers of grapes (GEŠTIN.ḪI.A) is probably listed in MARV 10.84 after figs but not otherwise in the Offerings Archive, although in MARV 7.71 the person contributing fruit from Katmuḫu has the title *ša muḫḫi* GEŠTIN.MEŠ. It is hard to distinguish between “grapes” and “wine” if the text merely has GEŠTIN(.MEŠ). Dates are mentioned in MARV 4.13:9’ from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta and MARV 10.1:6 (from the Stewards’ Archive), but not to my knowledge in the Offerings Archive.

⁹⁴ Freydank 1992a, Nos. 5 and 6; I suspect the difficult forms *ta-da-šu-ni* and *ta-da-šu-nu-ni* should be understood as infinitives with modal force (*ša ... tadān-šu(nu)-ni*) “whose payment (should be)”. Cf. *našku(n)šani* (p. 227 footnote 65).

⁹⁵ NINDA.MEŠ *i+na’ la a-za-am-ri* (l. 4) and *ki-i a-za-a[m-ri* (l. 8); eponymate of Aššur-šallimšunu (Ari/TP). Flour for fruit also in MARV 3.36:4.

⁹⁶ MARV 3.49 (Freydank 1992a No. 19).

that this was the specialist to whom the honey would normally be entrusted may be found in MARV 8.88, where Izbu-lešir seems to have taken honey from Šuzub-Aššur, the *kakardinnu*. Jakob observes that in some Neo-Assyrian texts the *kakardinnu* also handles *ḥaršu*, and there is reason to think that he also processed other breads after they had been produced by the *alahḫinu*.⁹⁷ Whether he was also in charge of the fruit, we do not know, but in light of the Neo-Assyrian evidence adduced by Kinnier Wilson (1972, 82), this seems entirely possible.

Presentation of Offerings

The short text MARV 5.66 neatly summarises for us the processing activities we can observe in the Offerings Archive:

¹ 5BÁN NINDA *mi-iṭ-ru* ² 1 ANŠE *ḥar-šu* ³ U₄.7.KÁM

⁴ 4BÁN NINDA *mi-iṭ-ru* ⁵ 1 ANŠE 5 ŠILA *ḥar-š[u]* ⁶ U₄.8.KÁM

⁷ *iš'-tu* ITI *ku-zal-li* ⁸ U₄.9.KÁM ⁹ *li-me* ¹⁰ *piš-qi-ia* NINDA.MEŠ *ḥar-šu* KAŠ.MEŠ

¹¹ IĀ.MEŠ LĀL ¹² *a-za-am-ru* ¹³ *a'-na'* IGI DINGIR ¹⁴ *ša-lu-um*

“5 *sūtu* *miṭru* bread, 1 homer *ḥaršu* – 7th day. 4 *sūtu* *miṭru* bread, 1.05 homers *ḥaršu* – 8th day. From 9th Kuzallu of the eponymate of Pišqiya the bread, *ḥaršu*, beer, oil, honey (and) fruit is completely (delivered) into the presence of the god.”

Two final deliveries of bread are recorded, followed by a statement that offerings are complete, listing the four food categories in their ultimate form: the grain has become bread, *ḥaršu* and beer, and the sesame is now oil while the honey and fruit remain in their original state. The offerings have gone into “the presence of the god”, and this phrase recurs in other texts, for example “He will place 1 *miṭru* bread, (and) 1 homer of *ḥaršu* (bread) in the presence of the god” (*a-na* IGI DINGIR *i-ša-ka-an*).⁹⁸ Other texts which do not explicitly mention the divine presence, such as MARV 2.14, monitoring issues of *miṭru* and *ḥaršu* alongside beer over a period of some months, are probably from the same context. While bread, and no doubt also cakes and flour, are “placed” (*šakānu*), oil is “poured” (*tabāku*). In MARV 6.76, oil is poured out for the gods (*a-na* IGI DN *tabik*): Aššur, Ninlil (=Mullissu), “the gods of heaven” and Adad. MARV 6.31 is a longer but very similar text, recording libations of oil to some if not all of the same deities. What the pouring of oil entailed is not at first sight obvious. When water, and perhaps also beer and wine, are libated, it may have been into the ground, but possibly also into drinking vessels. Oil was presumably not drunk, physically or symbolically; when perfumed it was surely used for anointing, and possibly this was also true for untreated sesame oil as well. In any case we do know that divine figures were not only fed and watered but also anointed (CAD P 247-8), so that the oil very likely

⁹⁷ See Jakob 2003, 395–8. Here he refers to a largely unpublished Aššur archive from a house in eC9I in the south-west part of the city, described by Pedersén (1985, 118, archive M13), which includes receipts from a *kakardinnu* for bread received from an *alahḫinu*, suggesting that he then further processed the food. One tablet from this archive is published in Postgate 1994a, on which see Pedersén 1997a with details of provenance and lines restored from the excavation photo.

⁹⁸ KAJ 306a, 7–8; similar: MARV 5.66, reading *a-na'* IGI DINGIR in l. 13.

had a role in the rituals of the shrine alongside the edible and potable commodities which passed through the Offerings House.

Some texts record not the completed delivery but the future schedule of presentations. In MARV 6.40 rev. 19, officials, including three *alahhinu*, are charged with supplying grain for consumption (*ušakkulū*; see p. 140), while [Apl]iya “will give (beer) to drink” (*i-šá-aq-qi*), and is therefore presumably a brewer. MARV 6.35 is a list of sweet beer libations to a variety of recipients: the list begins with “the palace”, then there are 12 deities, some of them major but not including Aššur or his spouse; in a subsequent section we find about 20 further divine or deified recipients. From the present tense of *innakkal* (in ll. 45 and 48) it seems that this is a proposed disposition of the beer, rather than a record of actual usage. Records of completed disbursals (*talpittu*) may be recognised in MARV 5.7.

The texts considered so far all refer to the single stage in the passage of the materials through the Offerings House, from the food processors to use in the cult. Although these texts do state that commodities have been or will be placed or poured in the presence of the gods, we have no documents which record the transactions from the other standpoint, of receipt by an end user. These were presumably in the first instance members of the cultic staff of the shrine, but we have no indication of what titles they may have borne. There is no hint here of persons with prebendary rights entitling them to receive a portion of the temple’s daily or monthly income in kind, familiar from Babylonian practices, but the lack of evidence is not conclusive. One allocation of 3.5 homers of “white grain” from four *alahhinu* is described as “his evening meal” (*nubattušu*) and said to be “for the sacrifices (*a-na* UDU.SISKUR.MEŠ-*te*) of the 5th day”, but neither of these terms is common in the Offerings Archive,⁹⁹ and “evening meals” are mentioned in grain or bread distribution texts from other contexts, which are not necessarily cultic, as well as in Mutta’s Archive, where sheep are supplied to the royal table (p. 190).¹⁰⁰ One tablet which clearly records in detail a wide variety of food and drink offered to the gods (but not necessarily as *ginā’u* offerings) is MARV 3.16.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, its excavation number is lost, so it is not possible to know if it came from the Offerings Archive. It may well have not: while it does indeed mention flour (both *simdu* and coarse flour), honey and oil, the word *ginā’u* does not appear in the surviving parts of the tablet, and it also lists a range of foods, such as green vegetables (*mugillu ša urqi*) and salt, and also “wine for libation” (GEŠTIN *ana šurāri*), which never feature in the Offerings Archive, along with unfamiliar and unidentifiable items such as *agarimuri* and *saplišhi*. It must describe the detailed disposition of food and drink in the shrine, because several sections read just “1 table like this one” (1 ^{gis}*pa-áš-ru ki-i an-ni-im-ma*). The first recipients listed are Aššur and Šerua, and the offerings in each section are summed up as

⁹⁹ One further mention of “sacrifices” in the Offerings Archive is now attested in MARV 10.89:7–9 PAB 3 ANŠE 8BÁN ŠE *a-na* UDU.SISKUR.MEŠ-*te* ša ITI *hi-bur maḥ-[r]a* “Total 3.8 homers of grain received for the sacrifices of the month of Ḫibur”.

¹⁰⁰ MARV 6.20; compare MARV 3.1:9 (Ass. 20193: bread issues), 3.75 (Ass. 11018: sheep) and 4.74:14 (from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta: bread issue³). Tell Chuera No. 41:7’ refers to food for the evening meal for travellers (Jakob 2009, 75–6).

¹⁰¹ This text has now received a full philological treatment in Llop 2010a.

“this is the assignment for the presence of DN” (*an-ni-ú iš-ḫu ša pa-ni DN*) followed by the name of the deity or divine entity (e.g. the doors, rev. iii.5). It seems likely that this text was drawn up in the ambience of those responsible for overseeing the cultic activities within the temple. Another glimpse of the potential variety of the divine menu comes from texts which deal with bread issues. One of the tablets from Pedersén’s Archive M13 lists “tables” (*pašru*) of bread products associated with the town of Nabula,¹⁰² and MARV 1.7 (from Ubru’s Archive M8) lists very similar items, one section of which is noted as “of the assignment of (*ša iš-ḫi*) the town of Duara”, using the same word used in MARV 3.16 for the assignments of offerings to the various deities.

The inclusion in such texts of a variety of items which never appear in the Offerings Archive draws our attention to the very restricted range of products the provinces were required to submit. In particular, it is noticeable that there are no vegetables, spices or wine, nor are there sheep or other animals or dairy products, although we may be fairly sure that some such items sometimes featured on the temple menus. The Archive of Mutta the sheep fatterer often mentions sheep for “sacrifice” (UDU.SISKUR), but these are intended for specific requests or occasions, rather than a regular daily menu. Yet the temple offerings mentioned in Neo-Assyrian sources as coming from the provinces include, indeed consist of, sheep, often with the term *dariu*, which is conventionally at least understood to mean “regular”. I am not aware of the term *dariu* in Middle Assyrian sources, nor are sheep (or other animals) normally associated with the term *ginā’u* in the second millennium.¹⁰³ It seems as though different systems must have been in place for supplying the Aššur Temple (and its resident deities) with meat and wine.

External Contacts: The Archive Ass. 18764

The Texts

While the normal route for the commodities delivered may have been via the food processors to the temple cult, it was not their exclusive destination. On one hand there is plenty of evidence that the stocks of the Offerings House could be used to make loans to individuals, and on the other hand there are hints that some commodities found their way to the palace (see p. 126). Evidence for the loans comes in part from the group of tablets recovered from the third inscribed jar. This had a much shorter and less informative inscription than the others (“Of Šamaš-aḫa-eriš, son of Riš-Marduk”, Weidner 1952-3, 213), but was intact. The 31 tablets inside the jar, numbered Ass. 18764, were edited as a group in Freydank 1992a, whose numbers are used here. Unfortunately, as bewailed by Freydank, Šamaš-aḫa-eriš is otherwise completely unknown, but the tablets themselves

¹⁰² See footnote 97 for the provenance; the texts are Ass. 14842z, Donbaz 1988b, 5; cf. also from Ass. 14842 (M13) A. 3121 and 3211, Donbaz 1988a, 69–70.

¹⁰³ For one exception see now 9 UDU.MEŠ *ša gi-na-e* (MARV 10.90:13).

constitute a coherent group which merits description. All but a few have seal impressions, which is exceptional for the Offerings Archive.¹⁰⁴ In almost every case the tablet records an amount of a commodity owed to the Offerings Overseer, using the standard formula for debt-notes in which the debt is said to be “upon” (*ina* UGU) the debtor. Text No. 6 may serve as a typical example:

MARV 3.40 (Freydank 1992a No. 6)

(seal impression)

2 ANŠE 3 qa ZÍD.DA	2.03 homers of flour,
i+na GIŠ.BÁN ša gi-na-e	(measured) by the offerings <i>sūtu</i> ,
ša ki-mu a-za-am-ri	instead of the fruit
ša pa-ḥe-te ša 'DINGIR-pa-da	of the province of Ili-pada
ša a-na gi-na-e	which are to be delivered for offerings ¹⁰⁵
a-na É 'a-šur ta-da-šu-ni	to the House of Aššur,
ša ŠU 'a-ba-la-i-de	in the charge of Aba-la-ide,
ša UGU gi-na-e	the Offerings Overseer,
i+na UGU 'AG-KUR-ú-ni	are incumbent on Nabu-šaduni,
DUMU 'EN.LÍL-ú-ma-i	son of Enlil-uma'i.
a-di 10 UD.MEŠ	Within 10 days
id-da-an	he shall deliver,
ù tup-pu-šu i-ḥap-pi	<u>and (then) may break his tablet.</u>

(seal impression)

ITI al-la-na-tu UD.29.KÁM	29th Allanatu,
li-mu '10-ri-ba	eponymate of Adad-riba.

In the dossier, three Overseers are involved: Aba-la-ide (Nos. 1-11), Sin-uballit (Nos. 12-19, 23) and Sin-nadin-apli (Nos. 20-2, 24-31; once called Sinniya, No. 21). They can be dated to the 12th century (see Freydank 1991d, 64ff.). Aba-la-ide is given the title *ša muḫḫi gināē* (*ša bēt Aššur*), and this is also used by Sin-uballit in Nos. 12, 14, 15 and 18, and by Sin-nadin-apli in Nos. 27 and 30, while in Nos. 13, 16 and 19 and 21, 22 (GAL gi-na-e ša URU.ŠÀ.URU), 25 and 26 they are given the title *rab gināē*, which is invariably used for Izbu-lešir in the reign of Tiglath-pileser (see Freydank 1991d, 64¹⁶⁸; Jakob 2003, 175-6). The variation in terminology is plainly insignificant; more interesting perhaps is the information in text No. 22 that Sin-nadin-apli was also a brewer (LÚ.ŠIM=*sirāšû*): this might suggest that the brewers, whom we meet regularly in the Offerings Archive in general, belong on the regular staff of the Aššur Temple,¹⁰⁶ and also that the Offerings Overseer was, in this case at least, appointed from within the ranks of the temple staff (rather than brought in from outside).

¹⁰⁴ Thus for instance, of nineteen published tablets from Ass. 18767, found with the jar mentioning the confectioners and oil pressers (though this inscription was probably no longer valid), apparently only two are sealed (MARV 5.6 and 5.7).

¹⁰⁵ For the form *tadā(n)šuni* see footnote 94.

¹⁰⁶ But for the possibility that their establishment was separate; see p. 109.

Table 4.4. *Some attributes of the tablets from Ass. 18764*

Freydank No.	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	K
				<i>ša</i>	<i>ša ŠU</i>	<i>ina šipirti</i>	DUMU		time limit	IGI
1	•	•	grain	•			•			
2		•	grain	•						
3		•	grain wheat		•		•	<i>ilteqe</i>	1 month	
4	•	•	grain	•				<i>ana pūhi issuh</i>		
5		•	grain		•					
6		•	flour for fruit		•		•			
7		•	sesame honey		•		•		1 month	
8		•	sesame oil	•					1 month	
9	•	•	honey		•	•	•	<i>ilqe</i>		
10	•	•	honey figs sheep	•					1 month	3
11		•	sheep	•			•		1 month	
12	•	•	grain	•				<i>ana pūhi ilqe</i>	2 months	
13		•	sesame oil	•			•			
14		•	sesame oil	•				<i>ilqe</i>	20 days	
15	•	•	sesame oil	•			•	<i>issuh</i>	on demand	
16		•	sesame	•				<i>ana pūhi ilqe</i>		
17		•	sesame		•		•		on demand	
18		•	honey	•					20 days	
19		•	honey	•		•		<i>ilqe</i>	on demand	
20	•	•	grain		•		•		40 days	* + 1
21			grain		•		•		on demand	
22		•	grain	•			•	<i>ilqe</i>	11 months	
23			grain						on demand	
24			grain					<i>imtaḥar</i>		*
[25	•		sesame		•			<i>maḥir</i>		*]
26	•	•	sesame		•		•	<i>ilqe</i>	1 month	*
27	•	•	sesame		•		•	<i>ilqe</i>	on demand	*
28			sesame							*
29	•	•	fruit sesame				•		on demand	*
30	•	•	sesame oil		•		•	<i>laqi?</i>	3 days	*
31	•	•	figs			•	•	<i>ilqe</i>		*
32			grain					<i>maḥrū</i>		

A: caption naming seal owner

B: impression of seal

C: commodity/ies

D: creditor *ša* PN “belonging to PN”E: creditor *ša ŠU* PN “in the charge of PN”F: *ina šipirti* PN “on the instructions of PN”

G: patronymic of debtor included

H: supplementary verb

I: time limit or payment *ina ūme ērišušuni* “on demand”J: number of witnesses; * stands for “witnessed in front of Divine Bison (*kusarikku*)”.

Notes on Individual Texts

Nos. 2; 9; 21; 24 and 32 are the only texts without the *tuppušu iḥappi* clause.

No. 2 though sealed is not a debt-note and has the clause *ana lā mašāē šaṭir* “written down so as not to be forgotten”.

Nos. 24 and 32 are receipts and unsealed.

No. 25 is not from the same provenance as the other tablets (Freydank 1992a, 307), and is a work contract for pressing oil.

No. 28 is atypical.

Although most of these tablets are sealed bilateral documents, they derive from a rich variety of situations. The commodities, which are usually described as “belonging to” or “in the charge of PN, the Offerings Overseer” (*ša (qāt) PN rab/ša muhhi gināē ša bēt Aššur*), reflect the range of incoming deliveries with which we are already familiar (see Freydank, 1992a, 279-80).¹⁰⁷ The majority of the documents are debt-notes, recording an outstanding payment due. Three of these (Nos. 4; 12; 16) are explicitly identified as *pūhu* loans to be repaid. Other debts may be an offerings contribution not delivered on time (e.g. No. 1, restitution owed by boatman for grain he had soaked; Nos. 5; 6, etc.), or a payment made on the instruction of (*ina šipirti*) an official outside the temple (Col. F: in Nos. 9 and 19 the Governor of the Land (i.e. Aššur province); in No. 31 another provincial governor). The “debtors” include a palace overseer (No. 23), the mayors of Šuduḫi (No. 7) and Kilizi (No. 31), a priest of Adad (No. 14), a palace scribe (No. 16), boatmen (Nos. 1; 20), a diviner (No. 22), a provincial governor (No. 29) and the Governor of the Land (No. 30). Unlike most of the simple internal records of commodity issues, which are formulated as receipts (and of which Nos. 24 and 32 are examples), the debt-notes often include repayment clauses with a deadline of 3, 10, 20 or 40 days, or 1, 2 or 11 months, or with the phrase “on the day he requests” (Col. I), and the great majority include the familiar provision that when the payment is made, the debtor “may break his tablet”. These are therefore not mere memoranda, but tablets to be retained by the creditor in anticipation of recovering the debt, and this explains why, unusually for the Offerings Archive, all but a few of them (Nos. 21, 23, 24, 32 and perhaps 28) bear seal impressions. Hence these are formal documents, but they do differ in some ways from comparable texts in the private sector. For one thing, there are not usually any human witnesses (Col. K). Two tablets concerned with arrears of offerings (Nos. 10 and 20) are witnessed: this might be because the debtors are from northern provinces outside Aššur (from Nabula and Katmuḫu) and therefore more remote. No. 20 also has a penalty for late repayment (after 40 days), and the first witness is the Divine Bison (*kusarikku*), the doorkeeper of Šamaš, god of justice. The bison is recorded as a witness in six other tablets (Nos. 26-31), as well as in No. 25 (not from the archive) and occasional other texts from outside this archive. It presumably tells us that the transaction was formalised in front of the image of the bison in the temple to apply an extra sanction on the debtors. Another point in which the tablets differ from private legal documents is the frequent absence of a seal caption: this is evidently a measure of how familiar the debtor, and perhaps his seal itself, were to the Offerings House staff. A further difference is that, unlike the debtors whose patronymic is usually included (see Col. G), the creditors are often given no patronymic or professional designation.

¹⁰⁷ But in Nos. 23 and 31 no “creditor” is named, the amount owed is just “of the fixed offerings of the House of Aššur” (*ša gināē ša Ē Aššur*).

Notes of Arrears

The substances are mostly the regular four commodities which make up the standard delivery: grain, honey, sesame and fruit, but the contracts in this archive are usually concerned with only one event at a time (see the list in Freydank 1992a, 279-80). From other contexts we know that sometimes a different substance might be substituted (examples: oil for honey, and flour for fruit in MARV 3.36+84; Freydank 1997, 279¹⁴). The grain – normally presumably barley – is sometimes replaced or complemented by wheat (GIG(.MEŠ)). In other cases we find the occasional note that one substance is supplied instead of (*kimû*) another: barley in place of fruit (No. 5) or flour (ZĪD.MEŠ) instead of fruit (No. 6). In No. 10 and No. 31, instead of “fruit” in general, the debtor owes figs. Oil, presumably processed sesame, is owed in Nos. 8, 13-15 and 30. Exceptional are Nos. 10 and 11. No. 11 records two “good ewes” owed to Aba-la-ide in place of two goats; they are not described as offerings (*ginā’u*), and Aba-la-ide is given as the true “owner” – that is, they are *ša* “belonging to” and not *ša qāt* “in the charge of” Aba-la-ide. The same happens to be true in l. 5 of No. 10, but here the debtor is liable for 5 *qû* of honey, 5 *sûtu* (?) of figs, and 2 good sheep, all of which is described as “the remainder of his offerings which was imposed on him” (*reḥte gi-na-i-šu ša ina muḥḥi-šu iššaknūni*); this certainly seems to imply that the sheep were part of his fixed offerings, but unlike the honey and figs the inclusion of sheep would be unusual and one has to wonder whether they are not a rather different form of liability: one could compare for instance the use of sheep as “gifts” in the *šulmānu* (legalised bribe) contracts, and guess that they were perhaps here as a peace offering or bribe from a miscreant contributor, to buy clemency. The same practice is no doubt attested later, in a rare letter addressed to Izbu-lešir, where, after listing grain, honey and sesame which had been loaded onto the boat of Ḫimsateya as fixed offerings contributions, the writer, Šilliya, adds the remark that “I am sending to my lord 1 *sûtu* of wine and 2 sheep” – neither of these components of the fixed offerings menu.¹⁰⁸

Personal Loans

MARV 6.40 describes itself as “The first tablet of the grain of the high-officials and the Assyrians (*ša GAL.MEŠ-te û āš-šu-ra-ie-e.MEŠ*) which was withdrawn on loan, not returned” (*ša a-na pu-ú-ḫi na-as-su-ḫa-an-ni la-a ta-ur*, rev. 13’–15’). The situation is undoubtedly complex, for immediately preceding the summary we meet the remark “except for 35 homers of grain, former debts which were not repaid” (*ḫu-bu-li pa-ni-ú-te ša la ta-ú-ru-ni*, rev. 11’), and further on “Tablet of the grain of [...] the provincial governors, which the brewers and the bakers received on separate occasions” (rev. 20’–2’). However, the use here of the word *ḫubullû* gives welcome confirmation that the phrase *ana pūḫi* should in Middle Assyrian, as later, be understood as referring to a genuine loan (as opposed to the many documents where different kinds of liability are formulated in a similar way).¹⁰⁹ MARV 6.88 is a compilation of

¹⁰⁸ KAJ 302:12–15 (*ultēbila* =epistolary perfect). In a similar letter to Aba-la-ide, MARV 10.90, nine sheep are mentioned as fixed offerings, followed by one sheep *na-mur-ta-ka* “your audience-gift”.

¹⁰⁹ This is perhaps the place to protest mildly against the use of the term *fiktive Darlehen* to describe transactions which record an obligation. A debt or liability can arise for a variety of reasons, of which a loan or *Darlehen* is only one. A

debts (or repayments) of grain, several of which list amounts with a personal name plus patronymic and the simple remark: *pūḫu* “loan”. Such mentions of loans provide the background to the debt-notes from this jar which use the term *pūḫu* and would have been sealed by the recipient of a loan. No. 12 records 4 homers of grain borrowed (*a-na pu-ḫi il-qe*) by Iddin-Adad, cupbearer, for the *pandugani* ceremony of the House of Šamaš-mušašri; repayment is required within 2 months, when he may break his tablet. No. 16 is a loan of 0.15 homers of “regular (*sadrūtu*) sesame” to the palace scribe; when he returns it, he may break his tablet. It is hard for us to know which of the different debtors might have been considered a “high official” (*rābiu*) or “an Assyrian”, but it seems quite possible that they all belonged to one or the other category, if not both.

All these debt-notes were presumably kept together because they recorded external transactions which had taken the amounts in question out of the stock of the Offerings House (rather than into a different internal department). Their coherent nature, and the fact that the tablets were retained, probably indicate that these were all outstanding debts, which the management had not succeeded in recovering, so that the tablets were never broken on repayment (as provided for in the contracts). Thus this jarful of assembled tablets would have served two functions: (a) in the bilateral sphere, it constituted proof that the Offerings Overseer was owed the commodity listed. Once payment was made, the tablet would be broken, and it is thus a concrete functional tool in the regulation of obligations. Then (b) on a unilateral plane, it provides a record for the internal organisation of the Offerings House of the amounts of each commodity missing from the total stock of the commodity which would otherwise be expected. In this function too we may assume that once the outstanding debt was paid no further record of it would be retained because it was no longer needed to provide evidence for a missing amount.

There are not many comparable texts outside the Ass.18764 archive,¹¹⁰ although members of the organisation certainly took out loans, as shown by MARV 9.112, where we learn that Izbu-lešir himself had taken out a personal loan of flour, and by MARV 7.56, which notes several flour loans to groups of bakers of the Aššur Temple – obviously flour was more use to an individual householder than unprocessed grain. Given the time depth involved, several decades at least, and the fact that the group was recovered intact from a single jar, this suggests that on the whole the administrators of the Offerings House were not in fact burdened by too many defaulters, and the amounts in question are not specially large. The occasional clause that “he shall pay when he requests it of him” (Col. I) hints that there was an easy relationship between the Offerings House and some of its debtors whose obligation was not a personal loan but within a strictly administrative context. On the other hand, the reason this group belongs among the earliest tablets retained in the archive room is also apparent – they had been kept, some for a long time, in anticipation of an eventual repayment.

loan transaction can be included as one type within a general category of debt-notes, but the other documents are not modelled on loans, rather the reverse.

¹¹⁰ Apart from Freydank's No. 25, whose provenance is unknown, MARV 7.92 (Ass. 18784) is a sesame loan issued by Sin-nadin-apli, one of the earlier Offerings Overseers, with the *kusarikku* as a witness, as in several of the Ass. 18764 texts noted previously.

Where internal issues of grain and so forth, as opposed to personal loans, were recorded, one may assume that they were amalgamated over time into the larger lists or accounts of which we have examples, and would then have been discarded without further ado, so that such records from earlier decades are relatively infrequent.

The opportunity to borrow on favourable terms from the Offerings House was presumably a privilege accorded to certain state employees and “Assyrians”. Nevertheless, even though usually the transactions were not formally witnessed like a loan in the “real world”, and interest payable in the case of late repayment is mentioned in only two instances (Nos. 20 and 26), the distinction between the official acting as a private individual or in his administrative capacity was well understood and acknowledged, as is evident from the clause: “The flour which Izbu-lešir took out on loan has not been added (into the total).”¹¹¹

Three of the texts in this small group record transactions between the Offerings House and the governor of the province of Aššur, known as the “Governor of the Land” (*šakin māti*). In No. 9, a “representative” (*qēpu*) took (*ilqe*) some honey from Aba-la-ide (known to be the Offerings Overseer) “on the instructions of (*ana šipirte*) Urad-Kube the Governor of the Land”. Under Sin-nadin-apli, one of Aba-la-ide’s successors, Aššur-deni-din “son of Urad-Kube, the Governor of the Land” owes 1 *sūtu* of sesame offerings (No. 30), and 6 *qū* of honey is advanced to a confectioner (*kakardinu*) “on the instruction of (*ana šipirti*) Pišqiya, the Governor of the Land” (No. 19). Elsewhere in the archive there are transactions which hint at close relations with the Governor of the Land. His house (É) is mentioned in MARV 6.34:13, as a source of grain in MARV 5.41:7, while MARV 7.1:33 probably mentions a large amount of oil going to the Governor of the Land (*a-na šá-kín K[UR]*). It seems clear that these two establishments maintained occasional interactions, but as independent institutions, without the governor having any direct involvement in the administration of the offerings.¹¹² The Governor of the Land at the time of Izbu-lešir was called Aššur-kitti-šeši. His ratification of a case-tablet mentioned in MARV 1.49 (see p. 106) must be by virtue of his office as Governor of the Land, which gave him the standing to act as a neutral third party witnessing an administrative transaction. In a similar capacity he sealed the case-tablet MARV 7.3, which records a grain payment made by Izbu-lešir out of the Assyrians’ contributions, and in MARV 1.73 he ratifies a similar bilateral document regulating the offerings delivered by the province of Kulišhinaš. MARV 6.22, although broken, has Izbu-lešir and the governor of Idu settling their grain accounts for 4 years, here “in the presence of Aššur-kitti-šeši” although this tablet, which was possibly not a case-tablet, does not bear his seal:

[š]a iš-t[u]	[wh]ich? from [...]
a-di li-me[.....NÍG.KA ₉ .MEŠ]-šū-nu	until the eponymate of [...],
[ŠU.N]ÍGIN ⁷ 4 MU.MEŠ-te a-na pa ⁷ -an ¹ ^{1d} a-šur-ZI-še-š[i]	[a to]tal of 4 years, before Aššur-kitti-šeši,
^{1a} šá-kín KUR ¹ iz-bu-SI.SÁ	the Governor of the Land, Izbu-lešir,
GAL gi-na-e ù ^{1d} a-šur-a-bu-uk-PAB.MEŠ	Offerings Overseer, and Aššur-abuk-aḥḥe,

¹¹¹ ZÍD.DA.MEŠ ša ¹iz-bu-SI.SÁ a-na pu-ú-ḥi is-su-ḥu-ni a-na lib-bi la ka-mir MARV 9.112:20–2.

¹¹² For the involvement of the Governor of the Land in the reign of Tiglath-pileser cf. Freydank 2011b, 359 commenting on Šaḥḥutu, on whom see Llop 2008a.

EN *pa-ḫi-te ša* ^{uru}*i-di*

iš-ša-ab-tu

1' ME 3 ANŠE 9BÁN ŠE-*um*^{meš}

i+na ša-bat NÍG.KA₉.M[EŠ]

i+na UGU ^{1.4}*a-šur-a-bu-uk*-PAB.MEŠ

it-ta-áš-ka-an

NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ *ša* LÁL.MEŠ ŠE.GIŠ.IĀ.MEŠ

ù a-za-am-ri^{meš} *la-a šab-tu*

(seal impression Tafel 7)

the Governor of Idu,

have drawn up their [accounts].

103.9 homers of grain

at the drawing up of the accounts

on Aššur-abuk-aḫḫe

was imposed.

The accounts for the honey, sesame,

and fruit have not been drawn up.

MARV 6.22:2'–13'

In all these cases, Aššur-kitti-šeši seems to be acting as a neutral third party, but elsewhere he appears to be directly involved in Offerings House transactions. MARV 6.27 is a list including bread receipts for the administrative sphere of (*ana pitti*) Aššur-kitti-šeši. In MARV 5.57 he appears as the owner of about 11 homers of grain received by another official (Aššur-zera-iddina), while in MARV 5.37 and 7.4 his role is unclear because of the fragmentary condition of the tablets. In addition, as noted earlier, the Offerings House sometimes made use of the “granary of the Governor of the Land”, and taken together these all suggest that there was a regular connection between the Offerings House and the governor’s establishment, although it is difficult to define it more precisely. It is of course possible that the governor’s house was close to the temple, and their interaction was partly one of convenience.

External Contacts: The Palace

While the Aššur Temple is an institution separate from the palace, it has a close association with the king. This is obvious in theory from the fact that the king is the high priest of Aššur, but it also emerges from recurrent references to the palace within the Offerings Archive.¹¹³ It is relevant here that the Offering Overseers themselves seem to have had a close relationship to the monarch. In the two longer jar inscriptions, Izbu-lešir describes himself as the “servant of Tiglath-pileser”, and the title “servant of the king” (ÌR LUGAL) is given to his predecessor, Aba-la-ide, in one of the earlier texts from the third jar (Freydank 1992a, No. 9). The precise significance of this is hard to gauge (cf. Jakob 2003, 22 and 34) – because to our minds all subjects of the king might be termed his servant – but it must carry some significance, and I suggest that it is meant to imply that the official holds, as we would say in the United Kingdom, a crown appointment, and was installed by the monarch in person.¹¹⁴ This would agree with this use of the term servant in formal contexts, and the implication is perhaps that each Offerings Overseer was directly answerable to the king alone, not the subordinate of any other official.

¹¹³ For the location of the Middle Assyrian palace at Aššur see Miglus 2004, 248 §8.5.1d; inscribed bricks attest to building activity by Adad-nirari, Shalmaneser and Tukulti-Ninurta. This will have become known as the “old palace” (e.g. MARV 4.138:22; 4.140:22'; 7.99:16; Frahm 2002, 67) after Tukulti-Ninurta erected a “new palace” (e.g. MARV 2.17:47) on a vast terrace in the north-west corner of the city (see Miglus 2004; Postgate 2004, 212).

¹¹⁴ Note the same title accorded to the high-ranking military officer the *turtānu* in MARV 4.30:8.

Incidental comments in the administrative documents indicate that on a mundane level there was occasional direct interaction between the Offerings House and the palace. On one hand, there are members of the palace staff taking out loans or other kinds of withdrawals. An advance to an individual palace official is recorded as a loan (*ana pūhi*) of sesame to a palace scribe (Freydank 1992a No. 16). MARV 5.51 documents four separate withdrawals of grain, two at least by or for Sin-ereš, the palace overseer (*rab ēkalli*); in one of these instances the grain comes from Urad-Kube, baker (*alahhīni*), and a loan to Sin-ereš from the same baker is recorded on one of the Ass.18764 tablets (Freydank 1992a No. 23). This last tablet dates to the eponymate of Pišqiya, in the same year as KAJ 306a, which lists amounts of *miṭru* bread, oil, *ḥaršu* bread and beer, of which some are to go to the gods, but at least one delivery of which is to go to the palace. Unique at present is the information in MARV 9.19 that beer and bread deliveries went “additionally” (*ki-i ut-ru-te*) to the king’s sons (ll. 42-3 and 46-7). Other texts show that processed products such as bread, beer or oil were sometimes delivered to the palace in general, without mention of any individual recipient. MARV 6.73 suggests that the bakers and brewers may have had divided institutional loyalties, or put another way, that the palace and the Offerings House shared their services: it lists grain, wheat and bulgur given to the “bakers (and) brewers of the House of Aššur and the Palace as the first instalments of the contribution, for making bread (and) beer”.¹¹⁵ Perhaps in the same context, MARV 2.14 lists daily issues of bread, wheat and beer, some of which are delivered or to be delivered to the palace (rev. 4, 7). In MARV 6.35, a list of beer given to the gods begins with “the palace” (l. 2; cf. l. 36). Oil “poured” for the palace is mentioned in MARV 6.65:3; one simple note with no mention of the recipient or quantities involved states that “the oil has been poured for the palace for 2 months and 13 days” (MARV 6.14). The summation of MARV 7.1 listing the disposition of oil from the sesame offerings refers to some (at least) of the oil as *ta-ia-a-ru ša Ê.GAL-lim*: this term recurs in Neo-Assyrian administrative texts applied to offerings which “return” from the shrine for consumption by the palace (cf. CAD T, 60-1).

The combination of these scattered mentions of deliveries to the palace, occurring in the routine documentation without any additional comment, indicates that it was not exceptional for commodities from the Aššur Temple fixed offerings to find their way to the palace, either before or after they had been used in the cult. Amounts are not large, and we are not able to see if this was a regular arrangement, although the oil pouring over a period of two and a half months mentioned in MARV 6.65 does rather suggest this. There is no sign that the palace ever took out a loan, in the same way as the high officials and the “Assyrians”, and we have no way of telling whether this was merely a form of supplementary support for the palace establishment’s everyday needs, or if the deliveries were specifically intended for ritual activities in the palace which were felt to constitute part of the cult of Aššur.

¹¹⁵ Ll. 17–18: *a-na re-ša-te ša ma-da-at-te ana NINDA.MEŠ KAŠ.MEŠ e-pa-še*. Not entirely transparent is MARV 5.7, which notes disbursements of beer which had been decanted “for the temple (and?) the palace (*a-na Ê DINGIR Ê.GAL-lim*) in accordance with the case-tablet sealed by Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer”.

The Documentation

Introduction

Among the hundreds of tablets which have already been published from the Offerings Archive, few are precisely similar to one another. The circumstances which led to the writing of each tablet were evidently extremely varied, and in attempting to understand the nature and purpose of this voluminous documentation it is necessary to take into account a number of variables, as reflected in the choices of primary:secondary, single events:compilations, descriptive:prescriptive, internal:external, unilateral:bilateral, informal:formalised, legal:administrative and public:private, set out on pp. 79–80. What virtually every tablet has in common is that it describes the movement of a commodity or a bundle of commodities through the system. They can be sorted according to their stage of transmission, that is at what point in the passage from the original contributor to presentation before the deity the document was written. In most instances, they record the transfer of responsibility to and from members of the staff of the temple, making these internal transmissions. There are also, however, external transactions, which involve individuals who are either on the staff of other institutions or acting in a personal capacity. The discussion that follows is accordingly arranged into three main sections, which correspond to some extent with our preceding description of the system, that is, incoming contributions, onward transmission to the food processors, and final disposition.

Incoming Contributions

Unilateral Memoranda

There are hundreds of unilateral texts from the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive which simply record that certain members of the staff of the Offerings House received a quantity of cereals, sesame, honey or fruit. MARV 6.11 is a typical example.

<i>i-na</i> ITI <i>al-la-na-te</i> UD.14.KÁM <i>li-me</i> PN ₁	On the 14 th Allānātu, eponymate of PN ₁
10 ANŠE ŠE- <i>am</i> ^{mes} PN ₂	10 homers barley – PN ₂
10 ANŠE PN ₃	10 homers – PN ₃
10 ANŠE PN ₄	10 homers – PN ₄
PAB 30 ANŠE ŠE- <i>am</i> ^{mes} <i>maḥ-ru</i>	Total 30 homers barley they have received.

That is the entire text. Nothing to say who issued the barley. No seal or seal caption. The date is not a normal date, which would be placed at the end of a bilateral document. In other words, this is a purely unilateral administrative memorandum. The day of receipt is presumably of importance because it is mentioned explicitly in the body of the text (rather than placed at the end of the record), and in many cases the memorandum actually begins with the day's date. On the other hand the identity of the recipient is not stated but tacitly taken for granted, and we have therefore to assume this is a “unilateral” record written for internal consumption. For another example see MARV 5.54: this gives us first the date, then the

amount and the source, but in this instance also the name of the receiving official followed by *maḥir* “received”. One imagines that such records were written as the delivery came in, but there is always the possibility that statements of receipt like this apply to commodities which had already been delivered and were being transmitted to an employee with their source still identified. This may lie behind texts like MARV 5.17, which lists first a delivery measured out by Urad-Kube, and then two receipts by officials which may or may not have been taken from the same consignment.

Clearer evidence that a document was written when the contribution was first delivered comes from a number of tablets which have “tallies” on them, and hence must have been a record of the measurement of the commodity on its arrival. A simple example is MARV 7.46 (p. 101 Figure 4.7), which has the initial tally, then gives the resulting total of 86 homers, followed by the name of the person making the delivery and the date. Here too the identity of the receiving authority is not mentioned, but the note that it was “measured out (*ma-di-id*) in the House of Aššur” makes the position clear enough. The informality and ad hoc nature of these texts is even more apparent in some cases with more than one entry, giving not merely a grain tally at the beginning, but also miscellaneous unrelated jottings on the same tablet. MARV 5.57 is a case in point: below the initial tally totalled as 33 homers of grain received from a boatman, it then lists issues of grain made “on this same day” (*ina ūme anniema*) to bakers and associated grinders “for their work-assignment”. This grain might of course physically have been taken from the amount received, but the same cannot apply to the following entry, which after a ruling, records the receipt by Aššur-zera-iddina of an amount of more than 11 homers of grain, from which he will be making daily bread deliveries, because this grain belonged to (*ša*) Aššur-kitti-šeši (the Governor of the Land). It does seem that these transactions are found on the same tablet merely because they are (presumably) recorded by the same person, and on the same day.¹¹⁶ Hence these unsealed tablets can only represent internal documentation for the day-to-day running of the Offerings House, and this is reflected in the frequent omission of any mention of the receiving authority. As already noted, other tablets which show signs of haste, such as an untidy layout or the omission of the URU or KUR determinative, were presumably drawn up on location under time pressure, and were no doubt also unilateral notes for the benefit of the internal administration (cf. MARV 7.8; MARV 8.40). It is striking that in the great majority of cases, however informal, the date of receipt is stated, and this is presumably important for the future role of these texts. They had two broad destinies: on one hand, their information was the source for a range of bilateral documents acknowledging receipt of the offerings (see p. 130); on the other hand, this same information was absorbed into the internal accounting system of the Offerings House (see p. 134).

¹¹⁶ For another example see MARV 7.22, which begins with a tally, totalled as 96 homers [of grain] measured (*mad-du*), and then has a section describing it as the “received fixed offering of the provinces”, and probably (the text is damaged) gives the name of the delivering boatman and the date and names Izbu-lešir as the recipient. A third section seems to record something else, but it is too broken for certainty. MARV 8.13 from the same year was very similar.

Bilateral Receipts

There was an understandable need for provincial representatives who had duly provided their offerings to receive written confirmation of this, and this would require a separate document retained in their possession. MARV 1.62 is a receipt for 0.67 homers of honey, fixed offering of Arbail; the drafting of the document is relatively formal, giving the name and title of Izbu-lešir as the recipient, and the filiation of the person delivering the honey, Kidin-haldie, and stating the date of the delivery in the body of the text as well as dating the tablet itself (to the same day) at the end. Moreover, this tablet was sealed, presumably by or on behalf of Izbu-lešir, and could therefore act as a bilateral document, providing Kidin-haldie with evidence, if needed, that the delivery had indeed been carried out.¹¹⁷ The same applies to MARV 6.57, which lists two deliveries of fruit as received from one boatman on behalf of Idu, and from another on behalf of Talmuššu: this tablet was dated at the end and sealed, but does not mention the recipient. That these two tablets were sealed suggests they had a bilateral function (and we cannot guess why they had remained in the Offerings House). By contrast MARV 5.27, which is at first sight very similar to MARV 1.62, is unsealed. Here Izbu-lešir is stated to have received the “received fixed offering” of Šadikanni, comprising oil, sesame and *mirqu* flour from the governor of Šadikanni. While this was probably a document drawn up at the time of delivery, it displays a similar level of formality because the recipient’s name is given, and (probably) the filiation of the governor, while the date is mentioned both in the body of the text and at the end of the tablet. Nevertheless, since it was not sealed, it may merely be an internal document, acting as an archive copy of a sealed tablet like MARV 1.62, and retained for future reference in the Offerings House.¹¹⁸

If a more formal acknowledgement of the delivery of a contribution was required, the administration had recourse to the ratified receipt in the shape of a sealed case-tablet (*kiširtu*). A number of these are published, and some merit description individually:

- MARV 1.73 has an inner tablet recording Izbu-lešir’s receipt of the sesame and fruit (or *mirqu* flour, if we give credence to the tablet rather than the envelope) fixed offerings of Kulišhinaš for the eponymate of Tiglath-pileser, and an envelope (introduced by *tup-pí*) with a version of the same text. The tablet specifies the precise day of receipt and identifies three persons of Kulišhinaš (with their filiations) who make the delivery (though only the first of them is mentioned on the envelope), no doubt indicating that they were physically present to hand over the commodities. The document is ratified (i.e. encased and sealed) by the Governor of the Land, Aššur-kitti-šeši, and comparison with other texts shows that it is indeed his seal rolled on the clay (Figure 4.9).¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ Or compare MARV 8.78, receipt by Izbu-lešir of honey, sesame and fruit from Samnuḫa-ašared of the town of Šadikanni, from its annual contribution. Space for a seal, but the edition does not state whether the tablet was actually sealed.

¹¹⁸ It is of course difficult to know if these receipt tablets were indeed single tablets, or originally encased in an envelope, like those discussed next.

¹¹⁹ Ll. 14–15 have: Aššur-kitti-šeši the Governor of the Land ratified (this – *šá-kín KUR ik-ta-šar*).



Figure 4.9. Seal of Aššur-kitti-šeši on envelope VAT 15490 (Freydank/Feller, MARV 6.15; Siegel Nr. 1, Taf. 1-3). © Barbara Feller. Photo: Johannes Kramer, Berlin.

- MARV 3.36(+84) lists oil (instead of honey), sesame, fruit and some flour (instead of fruit), received by Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer “from the charge of Belini ... the boatman”. Ll. 12-15 state that the governor of Amasaku’s accounts have been drawn up; and the envelope states: “The case-tablet with the seal of Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer, is deposited in the authority of Laqipu the Governor of Amasaku”, evidently referring to a separate document.¹²⁰ It is clear that that case-tablet would provide the governor with proof that the listed contributions had been delivered, while the document we have may have served

¹²⁰ The corresponding lines on the tablet may read ¹⁷ *ki-šir-tu ša pi-i DUB! ša NA₄.KIŠIB* ¹⁸ *iz-bu-SI.SÁ GAL gi-na-e* ¹⁹ *i+na pi-ti 'la-qi-pi EN pa-he-te* ²⁰ *ša uru a-ma-sa-ki ša-ak-na-at*. Freydank points out that the tablet has the seal of Laqipu on it, as noted in MARV 3, p. 11 (1997b, 50). This actual document is not therefore itself the “case-tablet in accordance with a tablet with the seal of Izbu-lešir”, which it mentions as having been deposited, but MARV 5.42 (which has a similar phrase) could indeed be one such document.

Izbu-lešir's purposes by supplying proof that some of the total Amasaku contribution had *not* yet been delivered.

- MARV 2.24 may have been similar, although the source of the offerings is lost. It listed the grain and sesame (but not, as the text explains, any fruit or honey)¹²¹ received by Izbu-lešir, and the tablet was sealed by a servant of Ḫaballanu, the diviner, who may have had the status to act as a neutral third party, like the Governor of the Land in MARV 1.73 and other documents.
- MARV 1.25 is a sealed envelope in which Izbu-lešir acknowledges receipt of 54.5 homers of grain, fixed offering of Idu, from two persons (one a scribe); as we note later, it seems that the grain had already been allocated among the temple's food processers, and this document is perhaps not a record written at the moment of delivery, but drawn up subsequently in the light of details recorded elsewhere. Nevertheless it is anecdotal rather than an accountant's abstraction, and relates to a single event, since it identifies the persons making the delivery. Neither the tablet, nor the surviving portion of the envelope tells us who sealed the document, but in other respects it resembles other ratified documents.

In all these texts the anecdotal details surrounding the delivery suggest that they were drawn up in response to a single event, and very likely on the same day (although damage to the texts makes certainty impossible on this point), but later sections of the texts hint that the opportunity would be taken to update the mutual relationship between the two parties concerned: hence the statement in MARV 3.36 that the accounts have been drawn up (NÍG.KA₆, MEŠ ... *šab-tu*), and the comment in MARV 2.4 that "honey and fruit were not delivered".

Other receipts in the form of case-tablets were certainly prepared at a date later than the initial delivery, and list together individual contributions to establish the total from a single contributor over a period of time, making them suitable to record the long-term mutual relationship between contributor and the Offerings House. A critical term used in this context is *šalmu* "complete", which implies that a province has fulfilled its entire quota.

- MARV 5.42 (VAT 15468) begins by listing 135.6 homers of grain, 0.77 homers of honey, 7.7 homers of sesame and 5.8 homers of fruit, summed up as "the complete received fixed offering" (*ginā'u šalmu maḥru*), "of the city of Talmuššu for the eponymate of Ḫiyašayu". The next section specifies the day, and says "from the charge of Sin-zera-iddina, Governor of Talmuššu, Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer, has received. Sin-zera-iddina has encased (*iktašar*)", indicating that unusually one of the two principal parties here ratified the document, rather than a third party. The following section is badly broken, but a comparison of the fragmentary lines with MARV 3.36+84, makes it clear that the text then stated "Case-tablet in accordance with the tablet(?) with the seal of Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer [...] Sin-zera-iddina".¹²² Both tablet and envelope were sealed with the much illustrated

¹²¹ LĀL.MEŠ *ù a-za-am-ru*.MEŠ *la-a ta-din* (reconstructed from Tablet 1.20 + Envelope rev. 5').

¹²² Assuming both MARV 3.36 and 5.42 read *ša pi-i DUB¹ ša NA₄.KIŠIB* Izbu-lešir, which cannot be certain without collation (see footnote 120); MARV 3.84, the envelope for MARV 3.36, confusingly has just *ki-šir-tu ša NA₄.KIŠIB* Izbu-lešir.

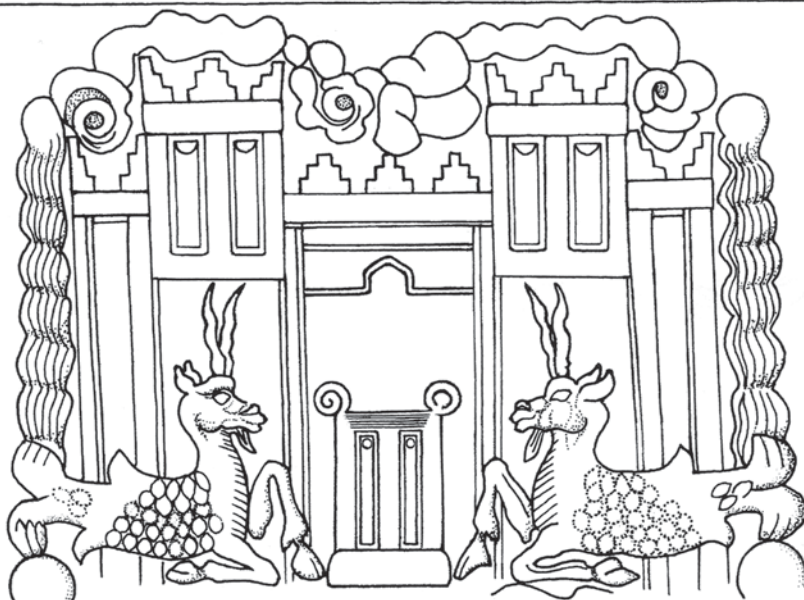


Figure 4.10. Seal impression on VAT 15468 (Freydank/Feller, MARV 5.42; Siegel Nr. 4, Taf. 3). © Barbara Feller/Ulrike Dubiel.

seal showing a temple façade (see Figure 4.10),¹²³ probably belonging to Sin-zero-iddina, who “encased”, rather than Izbu-lešir himself, whose seal is stated to have been used on an earlier document rather than this actual case-tablet.

What this document would do is provide the governor with confirmation that he had made his full contribution for the year, and this seems unlikely to have been generated at the moment of delivery (even if it did all arrive simultaneously), but to have been produced subsequently. Although dated in different eponymates, it is hardly coincidental that the amounts given in this ratified document (MARV 5.42 = VAT 15468) agree precisely with the entries for Talmuššu on the tabular list (MARV 9.12 = VAT 19206), and this shows that, as we would expect, the “completed fixed offering” is the amount entered in the annual table.¹²⁴

¹²³ Previously illustrated in Andrae 1938 Taf. 49a; Moortgat 1944, Abb. 45; MARV 5 Tafel 3 from VAT 15468 (MARV 5.42).

¹²⁴ The precise correspondence was pointed out in Freydank 1997b, 49 and 2006, 219.

- MARV 6.90 is also a sealed tablet in a sealed envelope: Izbu-lešir acknowledges receipt of 194.2 homers of grain: “Izbu-lešir has received from [P]N, representative (*qēpu*) of Kilizi, fixed offering of the land of Kilizi for the eponymate of Bel-libur and the eponymate of Nusku-alik-pani, for 2 years ... (and) has encased (*iktašar*) (the tablet)”. The text is dated in the month of Apu-šarrani / Kanunu, in the eponymate of Apliya, so in a third year. In a final section, we also learn that one of the *alalḫinu* has received a grinder called Šar-Adad.¹²⁵ Because it covers the Kilizi grain offerings for 2 years, this text shows clearly how a sealed case-tablet could be used to group receipts made over a long period.

Although each of these ratified texts differs in some respect from the others, as a class we can see that, whereas simple sealed tablets may have been used to record the receipt of individual ad hoc liabilities, a ratified case-tablet was prepared when a province’s total deliveries over a period were assembled and a statement finalised. The resulting document served a dual purpose, in part providing confirmation of the contributor’s payments, but equally establishing any outstanding arrears for which the province was still liable. This may explain why one copy at least of some of these ratified receipts remained in the Offerings House to be recovered by the excavators.

Bilateral Debt-Notes

A document very similar to these ratified receipts but exceptionally recording contributors’ liabilities rather than payments is MARV 6.86. This is a sealed tablet in an envelope, recording 466 homers of grain owed by the governor of Arbail and two other governors: one part of the debt is the fixed offering of 295.3 homers due from Arbail for the eponymate of Aššur-šallimšunu (probably the preceding year), but 170.7 homers is a “deficit (recorded) in their formally executed tablet” (*mu-ṭa-ú ša ŠÀ tup-pi-šu-nu ša-bi-it-te*). Although broken, the penultimate section of the text on the tablet and/or the envelope probably named Izbu-lešir as having received a quantity delivered, and there follows a concluding section which specifies how much of the total debts has remained (*ir-ti-iḫ*), and states that they “have drawn up their accounts on the 25th of Kuzallu/Kanunu, eponymate of Šamaš-apla-ereš”.¹²⁶ Examples of such a “formally executed tablet” (*tuppu šabittu*) recording arrears can be found in the texts from the jar (Ass. 18764), for example Nos. 5, 28-31 in the edition of Freydank 1992a. Typically, these documents are sealed (but not in an envelope), and employ the concluding clause *tuppu-šu iḫappi*, “he shall break his tablet”. They are concerned with debts from persons outside the Offerings House, and are not used for the liabilities of its internal staff. Similar to these is MARV 7.71, a sealed bilateral document recording the arrears of sesame

¹²⁵ Unfortunately, since two different recipients are mentioned, it is not obvious to whom the seal rolled on both tablet and envelope belonged, although the text would favour Izbu-lešir, which is curious since the seal itself is an inscribed Kassite seal, possibly owned originally by a man named Nabu-apla-iddina (tentative reading of L. Sassmannshausen, apud Feller in MARV 6, p. 85).

¹²⁶ For other texts mentioning arrears, often in fragmentary and difficult contexts, see among others MARV 7.55; 8.25.

and fruit for the eponymate of Marduk-aḫa-ereš owed by the governor of Ḫalahḫu: “he shall bring¹²⁷ and measure them out in the Offerings House, and (then) may break his tablet”.¹²⁷ It seems likely that MARV 6.86 was drawn up as a case-tablet because it constituted a statement compiled over a period in the same way as some of the receipts.

Internal Records – Receipts

There are numerous documents which group together contributions from more than one province, and for this reason can only have served the internal purposes of the organisation with no bilateral function. Thus MARV 6.42 is a list of liabilities incumbent on various persons (*ina muḫḫi* PN) in sesame, grain and honey, compiled from individual debt-notes: “in accordance with the formally executed tablets (*tuppāte šabbutāte*) incumbent on the Assyrians (DUMU.MEŠ *áš-šu-ra-ie-e*) and chief boatmen”. Those bilateral documents will have been sealed, at least, and it is noticeable that most of the debtors mentioned are given their patronymic, underlining the fact that they are not internal employees of the Offerings House. The same applies to MARV 9.95, which lists both the deliveries and the undelivered arrears of grain (l. 25: ŠE-um^{mes} *a-di maḫ-ri ù LÁ.MEŠ*) of each of 23 individual boatmen who are all given their patronymics.

Other internal records list receipts over a number of days, and must have been an interim stage in the recording process. MARV 6.70 has grouped receipts of “barley received of the provinces” for an unspecified month, while MARV 5.35, summarised as “the fixed offerings received of the eponymate of Ninurta-apil-Ekur”, gives all four categories of contribution, in ruled-off sections for a number of provinces, and although broken evidently mentions the names of boatmen involved in the deliveries. This may have been one of the sources for a tabulated account for a full year, of the kind discussed in Freydank 1997b and 2006 (see p. 97). Such tablets bring together all the receipts of contributions from the 20 (MARV 5.1, 2 and 14) to 27 or 28 provinces, arranged in four columns, for grain, honey, sesame and fruit. These lists, which are not sealed or witnessed, and usually only dated by the eponym year stated in the heading (no day or month), are described as *ginā'u maḫru ša pāḫāte* “the received fixed offerings of the provinces” (e.g. MARV 2.21:29) and/or *ginā'u maḫru ša lime* PN “received fixed offerings of the eponymate of PN”.¹²⁸ Freydank has noted at least two instances where the entry for a commodity and a province as listed in the tabulated account agrees with a smaller document, although in each case for a different year (1997b, 49). The ratified case-tablet VAT 15468 (MARV 5.42; eponym Ḫiyašayu) gives the same amount of 135.6 homers of grain as the entry for Talmuššu in MARV 2.21:5 (eponym Pa'uzu), and ll.1-4 give the exact same amounts for all four commodities entered on VAT 19206 (MARV 9.12:6 dated to Salmanu-zeru-iqiša). In general, it seems reasonable to assume, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, that the intention was to provide a definitive statement of the entire provincial offerings received in a given year.

¹²⁷ ⁸ <ú->ba-la i+na É gi-na-e ⁹ i-ma-da-ad ¹⁰ ù tup-pu-šu ¹¹ i-ḫap-pi.

¹²⁸ For example MARV 2.21:32; 5.1:1 and 26; 5.2:1; 5.14:1 and 25; 6.1:28; [7.27:29]; 8.24:1. See Freydank 1997b for further details of several of these lists, most of which are now published in MARV 5–9.

Internal Records – Arrears

A glance at any of these tabulated receipts reveals gaps, which suggest that not all the prescribed offerings always arrived on time. While we do not usually have texts recording a “non-arrival”,¹²⁹ the failure to deliver did not go unnoticed. A deficit is a *muṭṭā'u* (written both syllabically and LÁ(-ú), LÁ.MEŠ). We have several five-column tabulated accounts which list deficits for a year in the same format as the tabulated receipts just described. MARV 5.4 lists the “fixed offerings deficits, of the eponymate of PN” due from 22 provinces (*gi-na-e* LÁ.MEŠ *ša li-me* P[N]), and MARV 7.6 “the fixed offerings deficits of the provinces, of the eponymate of Pi[šqiya, whose(?)] receipt [has been ordered(?)] in the eponymate of HabaKAR”.¹³⁰ Comparable texts are MARV 6.82, and perhaps MARV 6.2 (see l. 4). MARV 5.64 from the eponymate of Liptanu records no deficits of grain, only of honey, sesame and fruit, and only seven provinces are named and shamed, but it is interesting in that MARV 5.67 is the corresponding positive account which tabulates the offerings received in the same year. The process of drawing up the accounts is visible in MARV 6.22, where we read: “At the drawing up of the accounts 103.9 homers of grain were imposed on Aššur-abuk-aḥḥe. The accounts of the honey, sesame and fruit were not drawn up”.

These tabulated accounts of arrears were so described by Freydank 1997b, 49, and I believe he was correct. Subsequently he changed his mind,¹³¹ but this seems unnecessary, as the tabulated arrears form a natural complement to the tabulated receipts, and it is clear that a record of the individual arrears was assiduously maintained. The complete annual record of receipts obviously served on one hand to exonerate the administrators of the Offerings House from the missing amounts, but also to establish the contributors’ remaining liabilities, and we must expect them to have drawn up corresponding documents recording the provinces’ arrears. As far as I am aware, none of the tabulated annual accounts of receipts or arrears is sealed. They appear to be unilateral documents prepared for the internal purposes of the Offerings House, because if required the tablets on which they are based would have provided sufficient information about arrears to be collected from each individual province.

It is true that the sequence of documents is sometimes hard to establish: logically, without accurate dates for each text, a single document could either contribute to a collective account, or be extrapolated from it, or indeed be drawn up simultaneously. Whether it was before, during or after this procedure, the accountants were able to draw up the kind of bilateral document already discussed under *Bilateral Debt-Notes*, in which the individual contributor acknowledges an outstanding deficit. When accounts were drawn up to show the arrears, any such debts needed to be taken note of, and we can see that process in a fragmentary compilation of grain “deficits”, which included three or more entries “in accordance with the formally executed tablet (*ša pi-i tup-pi ša-bi-it-te*) of PN” (MARV 6.85 = 7.98). A similar process is

¹²⁹ Though for an exception see MARV 5.36:14–15 where we read: “Total: 7 *sūtu* 9 *qū* (bread) paid (*hi-it*), 6 ½ *qū* deficit (LÁ.MEŠ)”.

¹³⁰ ²⁸ *gi-na-ú* LÁ.MEŠ *ša pa-ḥa-a-te ša li-me* ¹*pi[š-qi-ia]* ²⁹ [*ša*] *i+na li-me* ¹*ḥa-ba-KAR ma-ḥa-ar[-šu(-nu)]* ...] (at the end of l. 29 we may need to restore a form such as *qabiūni*).

¹³¹ MARV 5, p. 8 on No. 4: “Der Terminus *ginā'u muṭṭā'u* ... bezieht sich ... auf ebenfalls gelieferte Mengen, die jedoch in einem bereits abgelaufenen Eponymat fällig waren”.

attested in MARV 7.8, where a contribution from Nineveh is listed among a number of miscellaneous receipts, with the note “after their arrears have been removed”.¹³²

Incoming Contributions: Summary

Records of incoming contributions were written down as they arrived. This information could both be compiled into longer documents for the internal purposes of the Offerings House’s administrators, and be used to provide the contributing provincial officials with acknowledgement of their payments. Governors or their representatives no doubt received written receipts, some at least of which took the form of case-tablets (*kiširtu*), normally sealed by a neutral third party. We have few of these, and if, as to be expected, they were made out for each province’s contribution, those we have can only be a small fraction of the original documentation, as Freydank points out (1997b, 50). This is understandable, because such initial documents would eventually become otiose. On one hand, the administrators seem to have drawn up an annual tabulated statement of receipts which would presumably incorporate all the individual entries; and on the other hand at some point a provincial governor might expect to receive a further formally ratified document, establishing the current state of liability. Such elaborately sealed case-tablets are not legal documents, in that they have no witnesses, and they are already in use a century earlier in other state enterprises, for regulating transactions between state officials.¹³³ Equally, the bilateral documents on which individual unfulfilled liabilities were recorded are typical administrative debt-notes in that, although sealed by the debtor, they are not usually witnessed, and then most often by the Divine Bison rather than a human witness.

Onward Transmission within the Offerings House

Internal Memoranda

Once the commodity had been received by the Offerings House it could presumably be stored until needed, or perhaps passed on immediately to the food processors. A short text like MARV 7.70 may record the receipt of a single amount of grain by a single recipient, but in most cases more than one recipient is listed, often three or four *alahḫinu* whose names frequently recur, for example MARV 5.23 where three of them receive 7.5, 7 and 7 homers of wheat totalling 21.5 homers on the 29th of Allānate. Like most such texts these are introduced by the precise date, rather than having it placed at the end of the text. So similarly in MARV 6.11 three of them receive 10 homers each on the 14th of Allānate, or in 6.12 four of them 1 homer each on the 10th of Sin. The recipients sometimes include brewers, and they do not always receive comparable amounts, so for example MARV 7.20 lists a range of different amounts received on one day by seven persons, totalling 38.3 homers. Nevertheless, it is clear that in many

¹³² *iš-tu LÁ.MEŠ-šu-nu še-li-ú-ni ...*

¹³³ See pp. 70–1.

instances there was a deliberate attempt to share out the amounts issued equally. This applies to individual occasions and smaller amounts, but may have been attempted on a longer time frame, because in the undated text MARV 6.48, two bakers are each recorded as recipients of a large and almost identical quantity of grain (224.8 or 223.6 homers), which yields either 187.595 or 187.76 homers of flour “together with the rations of his grinders”.

2 ME 23 ANŠE 6BÁN ŠE-*um*^{meš}

ša ¹IR-^d*gu-la maḥ-ru-ni*

1 ME 87 7BÁN 6 *qa*

ZÍD.DA.MEŠ *a-di ŠUKU-at*

té-i-ni-šu ša ¹IR-^d*gu-la*

223.6 homers of grain

which Urad-Gula has received:

187.76 homers

of flour together with the rations

of his grinders – of Urad-Gula

MARV 6.48:19-23

MARV 6.12 is explicitly noted as “written down so as not to be forgotten”, but all these unsealed notes must belong in the same category of unilateral or internal memoranda.

Bilateral Receipts

By contrast, the case-tablet MARV 6.19 records the issue of 24 homers from the fixed offering of Ḫalahḫu; the tablet is most unusually sealed by three of the *alahḫinu* or brewers who have received amounts of grain, and so this appears to be a simple bilateral receipt, not one of the transactions ratified by a third party which are more common in the Offerings Archive. MARV 6.24 from the same year and with the same issuing official is very similar, and records an issue of 30 homers from the province of Šudu to a group of seven who include both bakers and brewers; the tablet is sealed by three of the recipients. The envelope states: “Case-tablet of the grain for the work-assignments of the bakers and brewers, from out of the grain of the House of Kidite”.¹³⁴ MARV 6.15 is also a sealed case-tablet (see Figure 4.9), recording the issue of no more than 4.2 homers of grain (*kiširti* 4 ANŠE 2B[ÁN] ŠE-*im*^{meš}) to three of our familiar *alahḫinu* “for their work-assignments” (*a-na* GIŠ.GĀR.MEŠ-*šu-nu*).

It is difficult to see why these particular issues should have been recorded on such a formal document, when there are so many informal unsealed tablets with very comparable information, unless it is because these were “for their work-assignments” (*ana iškārāte-šunu*), as MARV 6.15 and 6.24 state (and the envelope of MARV 6.19 may also have specified).¹³⁵ We know from other archives that the periodicity and amounts of “work-assignments” were precisely defined and they may therefore have needed to be accounted for separately.¹³⁶ Their issue was not recorded in a formal debt-note, which would have required some action on their part to justify the destruction of the tablet, but on a receipt which would then serve as

¹³⁴ MARV 3.29 (Freydank 1992a No. 32) is an informal list of 84.8 homers of grain issued to six *alahḫinu*, which notes that it is “of the city of Šudu”.

¹³⁵ The envelope VAT 20201 is illustrated in MARV 6 Taf. 9 (Siegel 4), but no copy of the cuneiform seems to be published.

¹³⁶ For the technical term *iškāru* in Middle Assyrian texts see Postgate 2010, 21–3. In addition to the syllabic and logographic writings already known (p. 22), MARV 9.103:9 appears to have the unusually abbreviated writing GĀR.MEŠ, but this may be no more than a scribal error.

a contributory component of the eventual adjustments of liabilities when an account tablet was drawn up (as indeed happened in MARV 5.7 see p. 143).

One puzzling feature of both MARV 6.19 and 6.24 is that the grain issued to the food processors is still identified by its origin from one of the contributing provinces. This is by no means unique: another case-tablet receipt MARV 1.25, which includes some difficult metrological details,¹³⁷ deals with issues of grain to five bakers and brewers deriving from the fixed offerings from Idu. It seems curious that once the commodities had entered the stocks of the Offerings House there should be any call for retaining such details in the onward transmission. One explanation may be that the scribes are here saving the time of all concerned (a) by routing a consignment directly from its delivery to the processors, with no storage episode in between, and (b) by recording both the receipt of the commodity from outside and its assignment to the processors on a single document rather than multiplying the “paperwork”; but other explanations may be equally plausible.

Internal Monitoring of Transactions

Individual memoranda of issues (as described on pp. 137–8) were compiled into statements, some covering no more than a couple of days (e.g. MARV 5.66), but others often a period of weeks or more, for example MARV 5.29, which lists the receipts from the 1st, 2nd, 6th, 7th, 8th, 12th and 16th of a single month (continued on the damaged reverse). Information of this sort could be further edited into texts which stated “From day X to day Y”. Such internal documents may not specify either the source or the destination of a commodity, but list separate periods for which the offerings were “complete” (*ginā’u šalim*, MARV 6.66). It appears most likely that these documents were drawn up to establish whether the offerings had actually reached their intended destination in the temple (or, especially with oil, the palace), rather than to assist in settling accounts with individual food processors.¹³⁸ This is suggested by MARV 6.65, which is concerned with the dates on which oil offerings were “complete”, “held back” (*kali*) or “cut off” (*batiq*), because oil was not normally delivered from an external source but produced by the Offerings House’s own oil pressers.

iš-tu ITI *mu-ḥur*-DINGIR.MEŠ UD.23.KÁM *li-me* KIMIN-*ma*
a-di ITI *a-pu*-MAN.MEŠ-*ni* UD.9.KÁM *li-me* KIMIN-*ma*
 16 UD.MEŠ *gi-na-ú ba-ti-iq*
i+[*n*]*a* ŠA UD.MEŠ-*te an-na-te ša bat-qu-ú-ni*
i+na ITI *mu-ḥur*-DINGIR.[MEŠ] UD.26.KÁM *i+na* ITI *a-pu*-MAN.MEŠ-*ni*
 UD.6.KÁM [] 3.UD.MEŠ *ša-lim*

MARV 6.65:22-7

“From 23 Muḥur-ilani, same eponymate, till 9 Apu-šarrani, same eponymate, (making) 16 days, the fixed offering was cut off. During these days in which it was cut off, on 26 Muḥur-ilani, on 6 [(and) on ...] Apu-šarrani, 3 days, it was complete”.

¹³⁷ See Freydank 2010b for collations and interpretation.

¹³⁸ See pp. 117–8.

A similar concern to log the delivery or non-delivery of bread and beer to the temple ([a-n]a É DINGIR, l. 4) is reflected in the unsealed tablet MARV 9.19, with ruled sections for different dated periods, and the concluding note “[All?] this (is) what was issued during the cutting-off of the fixed offerings” ([...] *an-ni-ú ša i+na ba-ti-iq-te ša gi-na-e [ta-]ad-nu-ni*, ll. 48-9).

Internal Monitoring – Bilateral Documents

As already mentioned, a great many of the internal documents are distinctly informal, without mention of the creditor, or a seal impression, or detail of what is expected of the recipients, let alone witnesses or patronymics. Yet they must presumably represent the basis on which the internal accounts were prepared, and it seems clear that the staff could be held to account: some very similar texts are in fact sealed, and we have documents which record their outstanding obligations. These are not debts, in the sense of unrepaid personal loans – though there may have been these too – but liabilities incurred in the fulfilment of their duties. MARV 7.2 is an account tablet which was sealed by two of the bakers, and begins “After the accounts of the bakers, from day X to day Y ... 6 months and 6 days, have been drawn up”: we find that they are credited with the amounts they “have had consumed” (*ul-ta-ki-il*), which include the rations of the grinders, and they are here acknowledging liability for the balance for which they have not yet been able to show proof of consumption. MARV 5.40 comes from a similar process: although fragmentary it relates to an accounting period of 8 months for Ša-Aššur-lešir (l. 7), states the amount “charged to him” (*šakna[ššu]*), and then specifies the amount remaining.¹³⁹

Final Disposition

The Offerings Archive does not provide us with as much documentation of the ultimate destination of the offerings as we might expect. It is obvious that after the food processors had created their finished products they would hand them on to the consumers, and presumably they were expected to provide proof that this had happened. Among the texts we do have, there are two terms which must refer to this stage in the process. One is *šākulu* “to supply, hand out”, which has just been encountered in MARV 7.2, and the other is the term *talpittu* “disbursal, expenditure”.

Šākulu “To Supply for Consumption”

Unfortunately English cannot match the economy of Akkadian, where the causative of *akālu* “to eat, consume” can and often does tacitly imply two objects, both the commodity consumed and the consumer. At times one can translate it “to feed” or “to have (it) consumed”,

¹³⁹ ¹³ 72 ANŠE 1BÁN [...] ¹⁴ *i+na ša-bat* N[ÍG.KA₉,MEŠ-šu-nu] ¹⁵ *i+na* UGU ¹*ša*-[^d*a*-šur-SI.SÁ] ¹⁶ *re-[e_h/hi ...]*.

but in other contexts this will not serve, so here the imperfect solution has been adopted of translating *šākulu* as “to supply”, with the further implication that the commodity would be consumed only occasionally spelled out.

- MARV 3.9 is an unsealed document concerned with the history of four separate consignments of sesame. There is much detail of interest, but the passage relevant here reads: “6.7 homers of sesame ... together with [...] autumn (*ša har-pi*) sesame which was issued to Ibašši-ilu the oil presser to supply (*a-na ša-ku-li tadnūni*), you will add to the arrears of the eponymate of Erib-Aššur” (ll. 13-22).¹⁴⁰ This expresses clearly the concept that the food processor’s obligation, after treatment of the commodity received, was to pass it on to be consumed (*akālu*) by the end user, whoever that was.
- MARV 7.2 lists obligations imposed on the bakers after their accounts had been processed, and is sealed by at least two of them (Mušezib-Sin and Urad-Gula). In preparing the accounts and determining their liabilities, the scribe lists amounts of grain which they had supplied (*ul-ta-ki-il*), together with the rations of grinders. It seems clear that, however they carried out their supplying, it was known in sufficient accuracy to be included in the accounting process. Yet we do not have any receipts, either unilateral or bilateral, which record amounts consumed at this stage.
- MARV 6.48 is concerned with the activities of some of the best-known bakers, including once again Mušezib-Sin and Urad-Gula, but also Aššur-danninanni who “had supplied (*ú-ša-ki-lu-ni*) [... flour together with] the rations of his grinders” (ll. 16-18). The interest of this document is that their initial liability is stated as an amount of grain, but their outgoings, the commodity they supply, are stated as flour, thus making it clear that the scribes are recording the issue of the processed product to its end user. Once again, though, the identity of the end user is not stated, no doubt because this was known to all concerned and not in need of description.

Prescriptive Documents

Some documents specify amounts issued with a statement as to how, and in particular when, they should be used. Such statements of “duty to supply” include MARV 5.13, dated on the 15th of the month, which records that after their accounts have been drawn up to the 14th day, from the 15th day three named bakers “will receive the grain, and will supply” (*imaḥḥuru ... ú-ša-ku-lu*) a different amount each.

iš-tu NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ-šu-*nu*
ša a-lāḥ-ḫi-ni^{mes} *ša a-di* ¹TI *ša*¹ *k[e-na-te]*
 UD.14.KÁM *li-me*
*ša*¹DI.KUD-*ni*-^dMAŠ *ša-ab-tu-ni*
 8BÁN 4 ŠILA ŠE-*um* *ša*¹10-*ši-ma-ni*

After their accounts,
 of the bakers, for up to month Ša-kenate
 14th day, eponymate
 of Dayyani-Ninurta, have been drawn up:
 0.84 homers of Adad-šimanni

¹⁴⁰ L. 22 reads *a-na* LÁ.MEŠ *ša li-me* ¹SU-*a-šur ta-kám-mar*. The phrase *ana šākuli tadnūni* recurs in l. 32 with reference to an *alahḫinu* and issues of oil (rather unexpectedly).

1 ANŠE 5BÁN 7 ŠĪLA ša ¹IR-^dgu-la
 1 ANŠE 3BÁN 5 ŠĪLA i-na UGU ^{1d}[x (x)]-EN-ni
 ŠE-am i-maḥ-ḥu-ru
 iš-tu ITI KIMIN-ma UD.15³.[KÁM]
 ú-ša-ku-lu
 [IT]I šá ke-na-te UD.15³.KÁM
 li-mu 4-ú ša ¹DI.KUD-ni-^d[MAŠ]

1.57 homers of Urad-Gula
 1.35 homers owed by [PN] -
 grain they shall receive, (and)
 from the same month, 15[th] day,
 they shall supply it for consumption.
 Ša-kenate, 15³th day,
 4th eponymate of Dayyani-[Ninurta]

MARV 5.13

Similarly in MARV 5.17 Aššur-šumu-le[šir] has received grain and “from out of it he will supply (*ina libbe ú-ša-kal*) from the 19th day”.¹⁴¹ What they will supply is not stated, but we may reasonably assume that it was flour resulting from their processing. This can be supported by the relatively long text MARV 6.40, dealing with amounts of grain, and at least two grades of flour (*simdu* and *mirqu*): here amounts of grain received are listed, followed by a section with amounts of flour which specifies “He shall supply (*ú-ša-kal*) from day X” (l. 15). Similarly “from the 14th of Muḥur-ilani Pa’uzu will supply, (and) from 3rd³ Apu-šarrani three bakers and Ṭabiya will supply” (rev. 16-18).

Referring to a stage comparable to these grain-to-flour texts is the sesame-to-oil text MARV 7.1, where the oil derived from incoming contributions of sesame is allocated for daily consumption (by the palace and temple, to judge from the end of the text). As noted earlier, when oil is consumed it is “poured” (*tabik*),¹⁴² and similarly with other commodities we do meet other verbs in place of *šākulū*. Thus one does not make people “eat” beer, and the corresponding term is *šaqa’u* “to give to drink”. In MARV 6.40 while three bakers and the man called Ṭabiya have a duty to “supply” (*ušākulū*), Apliya (a well-attested food processor, presumably a brewer) “will give to drink (*išaqqi*) from the 10th day of the same month”.¹⁴³ Honey, like flour, is “eaten” it seems, because MARV 8.88 records the transfer of an amount of honey with an obligation to “supply from (this) for 2 months”;¹⁴⁴ the honey may not have needed processing, but a confectioner (*kakardinu*) is involved in the transaction.¹⁴⁵

It is noteworthy that these statements of duty to supply are often prepared “after the accounts have been drawn up”.¹⁴⁶ This makes it clear that the organisation has worked out how much of the raw commodity the official in question is liable for, and what this will amount to in terms of daily supply of the finished product. The constant inclusion of the dates or length of time reflects the fact that the cult required a regular supply day in, day out, and it was critical that the officials immediately responsible for making the delivery knew when their period

¹⁴¹ The same phrase appears in MARV 7.41, and cf. MARV 5.28:14–15, where the *alahḫinu* and the brewers “will supply”.

¹⁴² For example MARV 6.31, a record of oil “poured” in temples, similarly MARV 6.14, oil “poured” for the palace (*a-na É.GAL-lim ta-bi-ik*).

¹⁴³ Similarly in the sealed account MARV 5.7, one of the temple bakers has drawn up the accounts for one of the brewers, for beer which “he had poured out (*išqi’ūni*) to the temple (and?) the palace”.

¹⁴⁴ PAB 2 ITI UD.MEŠ-te i-na lib-be ú-ša-kal.

¹⁴⁵ For the supply of honey cf. also MARV 7.34, where Aššur-šuma-iddina is probably an *alahḫinu*.

¹⁴⁶ So also in MARV 7.41.

of duty began and ended. These are definitely internal and relatively informal documents and they are not sealed: because daily amounts are not usually stated, it is presumably accepted by both parties how much is to be provided each day and occasionally even the commodity itself is not specified. The question remains of how the official provided proof that he had carried out the obligation. No definite answer can be offered. Conceivably he was given a written receipt each time he made a delivery, but we have no examples of this. Perhaps therefore the regular supply of contributions for the cult was so securely established that it could be assumed that it would have taken place, and only default from this would have triggered fresh documentation. In other words, the official could simply state: “I was on duty for those days, and there was no default (therefore I have fulfilled my duty)”. This position could operate with a known mechanism for controlling such expenditure which can be seen working in the Stewards’ Archive (MARV 1.23, p. 162 No. 15), where an official can fulfil his liability to burn incense by presenting his audited accounts.

Talpittu “Disbursal”

The beer poured out by the brewer in MARV 5.7 is qualified with the term *talpitte* (MARV 5.7:8, 11), a word which refers to commodities which have been expended, and perhaps, literally “written off”.¹⁴⁷ This technical accountant’s term is not common in the Offerings Archive. In MARV 3.9:1-6, a quantity of sesame is “removed *ana talpitte* ... the remainder (*rehtu*) ... deposited”. The phrase *ana talpitte* seems to imply that the sesame is no longer available, or “written off”, even though it does not explain why. A comparable usage is attested in accounts relating to grain consumption from Durkatlimmu (e.g. Röllig 2008 No. 76-7), which have the same sequence of an amount characterised as *talpittu* (“Verbrauch”, “expenditure”) followed by an amount called *rehtu* (“the remainder”). The word is also applied in MARV 3.43:10-12 to bread: “a total of 2.3 *sūtu* of [bread], *tal-pi-te* which was consumed on the 16th day”, and to persons in MARV 6.74 rev.5.¹⁴⁸ The accountants use this term for commodities which have been disbursed to their next destination, and so have left their sphere of responsibility and can be deducted from any amounts for which they are held liable. In the case of MARV 5.7, which records the disbursal of beer poured out “to the temple (and) the palace”, we are told that this was “in accordance with a

¹⁴⁷ For the meaning “expenditure” note that Röllig 2008 translates “Verbrauch” (although remaining with the form *ripittu*). We are unfortunately still awaiting the syllabic writing of the first syllable as *ta-al-* which would settle definitively that the word is *talpittu*. However, the writing *RI-pi-it-te* in MARV 5.7:8 and MARV 3.9:2 is sufficient to make it highly probable, as the only available root beginning with *r* would be *rapādu(m)* (which does indeed yield a word *ripittu(m)*, but is plainly inappropriate). Happily the broad meaning “expenditure” can be neatly reconciled with philology if we accept the derivation from *lapātu*. The *taprist* form requires some connection with *lapputu* (lpt D). This is attested in MA meaning approximately “write”, but the D stem may sometimes have more accurately a pejorative meaning, as in English “write off”, to write down a loss (cf. Postgate 1986b). Cf. Jakob 2009 No. 54:23 (*la-pu-ut* “written off”), and CAD L for passages with clothing to be written off from the correspondence of Babu-aḥa-iddina.

¹⁴⁸ ŠU.NIGIN 17 ÉRIN.MEŠ *tal-pi-tu*. Compare MARV 1.8, which has the same sequence of *talpittu* followed by *rehtu* (cf. Postgate 2008, 84).

case-tablet (*kiširte*) sealed by Izbu-lešir, the Offerings Overseer”, and this agrees with the way case-tablets were used to confirm the completion of a transaction within the administrative system and could thus be used by the disbursing official to demonstrate that he had fulfilled his obligations.

Summary of the Offerings Archive Documentation

The archive discovered in Room 3' gives copious evidence for the documentation of the internal affairs of the Offerings House. The majority of the tablets were unsealed memoranda, and only a small proportion are bilateral sealed documents recording more formalised transactions. These may be debt-notes for outstanding arrears under the fixed offerings system due from an external person or organisation, or loans made to individuals from the Offerings House's reserves of commodities. Such tablets would resemble everyday commercial contracts if it were not for the lack of witnesses (and pledges or guarantees). Where the mutual relationship has been calculated over a period of time, the outstanding debt may be incorporated in a sealed case-tablet which also sets out the amounts which have been received, and this will sometimes be ratified with the seal impression of a third party. Sealed receipts are also occasionally found to record commodities issued to members of the temple staff, and some at least of these transactions may have been formalised because they derived from the *iškāru* work-assignment system.

Alongside these bilateral texts, there is a bewildering variety of internal records. Some of these are memoranda (occasionally even described as “written down so as not to forget”) recording transactions, which the scribes evidently used later on to compile more elaborate records. Some record the arrival of commodities at the Offerings House, some the onward transmission to food processors; very few have to do with the ultimate destination of the food and drink in the cult. There is no sign of any prescriptive document which sets out the annual quotas for the different provinces, which we can only reconstruct from other texts, but there is a class of text which is prescriptive, setting out the obligations of members of staff, often in connection with their acknowledgement of receipt of commodities. Yet other internal texts seem to be aimed at monitoring the flow of business through the Offerings House or giving a periodical summary, with statements of any shortfalls in the deliveries from the provinces or in the Offerings House's supply of commodities for the cult. Pride of place here is held by the tabulated annual summaries: some of these go back half a century or more from the time of Izbu-lešir, and were obviously retained for reference (whereas the great majority of the ephemeral internal documentation belongs to his time). Their purpose is not instantly apparent: Were they purely for internal consumption, or may we think that the staff of the Offerings House was expected to maintain such comprehensive records as a component of its “contract of employment” in the same way as some officials were required to provide audited accounts to acquit their obligations?

All this recording must have been carried out by scribes, and they no doubt also had a more executive role, dictating the purposes and nature of the documentation and the appropriate

procedures, but they are very hard to detect in the archive (see p. 95). As noted there, the best-attested administrative subordinate of Izbu-lešir is probably Aššur-baissunu, but his title is never stated. Given that other highly placed officials, for example *qēpu*, are sometimes assisted by a scribe (see p. 50),¹⁴⁹ this may well have been his function and indeed his title, but the documents do not trouble to mention it.

Conclusions

It was plainly the Offerings Overseer's concern that (1) all the prescribed provincial contributions should be received, processed and dispensed, and that (2) written evidence of these procedures should be prepared, kept and reviewed. We can identify several different document types which assisted in achieving this objective:

- (a) records of individual deliveries either singly or grouped
- (b) formalised receipts issued to contributors, sometimes including arrears.
- (c) separate lists of arrears.
- (d) internal compilations, monitoring what has and what has not been received.
- (e) annual tabulated statements of contributions received.
- (f) internal memoranda of issues principally to food processors.
- (g) sealed case-tablets documenting transmission between staff within the system for eventual incorporation into bilateral accounts, including work-assignments and other amounts
- (h) periodical accounts summarising the outstanding obligations of internal staff
- (i) prescriptive documents listing schedules for delivery of commodities to their destinations.
- (j) bilateral sealed debt-notes known as *tuppu šabittu* and documenting transactions with external parties, and with persons taking out loans in their private capacity.

If we seek to reconstruct from this something of the ethos and purpose of the administration, it is clear that there was a well-recognised divide between transactions taking place within the organisation and those which involved outside parties. Most of the records relating to the internal movement of commodities were unsealed memoranda, which provided a body of data from which periodical statements could be prepared, but were not of themselves bilateral instruments. Where the Offerings House provided its suppliers with evidence of delivery, or crystallised outstanding obligations, the bilateral terminology of commercial contracts was used, along with seal impressions, but usually without the formality of witnesses, whether these were debt-notes or receipt case-tablets. All this documentation does no more than control the operation of the system and provide documentary evidence of transactions which have taken place.

¹⁴⁹ An oil presser attested in the Offerings Archive was called Mar-apie, but it is doubtful whether he should be identified with the scribe of the same name, son of Sin-apla-iddina who takes out a loan in MARV 6.88:26–7.

It is understandable that the administration wanted to keep track of what was happening, and sometimes needed to generate bilateral documentation to secure the Offerings House's receipt of amounts owed. The scribes did, however, generate further documentation which monitored the progress of the operation. Whether Izbu-lešir and his staff needed this data to demonstrate to his lord, the king, that his duties were being satisfactorily carried out is something we cannot judge from the documentation we have.

4.2 | The Stewards' Archive

A large number of tablets have been recovered at different times from an area of the city south of the Sin-Šamaš Temple and west of the Ištar Temple. If these once constituted a coherent archive stored in a building, they had been comprehensively scattered over time and space, but internal criteria suggest that they all derived originally from the offices of the steward or Chief Steward, the official responsible for the management of a wide range of raw materials, animal, vegetable and mineral, and of finished artefacts. Although physically separated from the royal palaces – old and new – it is clear that this was a branch of the palace rather than a separate organisation, because commodities are often described as “belonging to the palace, in the charge of PN, the steward”, and the list of holders of the office, combined with the evidence of the eponym dates, shows that the documentation dispersed here derives from a succession of stewards who were not members of a single family household but individual officials operating over several generations from the reign of Shalmaneser and throughout the 12th and into the 11th century. They possibly all exercised their office from the same government buildings, premises dedicated to the receipt, storage and processing of the palace’s materials and equipment, although we cannot entirely rule out the possibility that the steward’s establishment was located elsewhere (e.g. in the palace itself) in earlier decades, and the documentation was relocated from there when the office moved.

As in the Offerings Archive, the majority of the documents here are unilateral memoranda, records for the internal use of the organisation, but there is little sign of any of the long-term monitoring documents generated by the Offerings House. The memoranda may record internal transactions, but also items received from outside, or issued for the use or consumption of other sectors of the palace organisation, such as grindstones, or aromatics to be burned as incense. Some of the incoming goods derive from diplomatic or international activities, and the stewards are sometimes charged with issuing rewards or baksheesh to individuals who have attracted the good will of the monarch.

*An important group of texts are bilateral documents recording the issue of raw materials to craftsmen and specifying the finished product to be delivered, such as garments, chariots and weapons. These are usually sealed but not usually witnessed, as we would expect of a legal contract in the world outside. Some of these work contracts or work and delivery contracts fulfil work-assignments known by the technical term *iškāru*, and many include the phrase “he shall deliver (the finished product) and (then) may break his tablet”. Whether we should consider these craftsmen employees of the palace or free agents undertaking contract work is an open question. We should probably classify the few texts in which metals are issued in a similar category: here the palace’s capital goods, mainly in the form of lead, are entrusted to travelling*

merchants expected to account before the king for their use of the capital, but this need not have prevented them from acting simultaneously as traders on their own account.

The Tablets and Their Provenance

This large archive came from a building (e7:40) squeezed between the Temple of Sin and Šamaš and a street running along the east side of the ancient Ištar Temple, on the southern fringes of the band of major public buildings along the northern side of the city (see Figure 4.1, p. 87). The main group of tablets was recovered in 1908 from the paving of a large courtyard at about two metres below the surface in squares eE6V/7I (Ass. 13058, Pedersén's Archive M7, Group C). Pedersén (1985, 76) reports at least 262 pieces, of which about 70 had been published in 2010. In 1913, from the same courtyard area but further to the east (fA6V) came almost 100 tablets (Ass. 21101, Pedersén's Group F), of which some 17 were published by 2010.¹ The precise location of tablets within the courtyard is only recorded for Pedersén's small Group B, 24 tablets in the western corner of the courtyard (Ass. 12979-80, Miglus 1996 Plan 120). Many of the Group C tablets (Ass. 13058) are fragmentary or poorly preserved, but in the excavators' notes seen by Pedersén their provenance is described as on the paving of the courtyard, and there does not appear to be a good basis for the idea that the tablets had been used as fill below the foundations of overlying Neo-Assyrian house walls (Pedersén 1985, 68).

The texts from these two main groups (Groups C and F) published before 2011 are all included in Table 4.5, together with a couple from Group B and a few strays, but readers need to be conscious that these represent much less than half the tablets recovered by the excavators from the fill of the courtyard.² Furthermore, renewed German excavations at Aššur in 2001 included work in the area between the Sin-Šamaš Temple and the Ištar Temple, which turned up nearly 200 fragments of Middle Assyrian administrative tablets.³ Summaries of some of these were given in Frahm 2002: much interesting information which extends our understanding of the stewards' activities is included in his catalogue based on preliminary notes and photographs, but it is not possible to exploit this data systematically at present. For these reasons I have not included any of these texts in the table, and I have also refrained from making generalisations about the make-up of the archive(s). Nevertheless, the individual

¹ A further eighty-two tablets from Ass. 21101 were published in MARV 10 in 2011, many of them mentioning Apliya, the Chief Steward. For the present they are not taken note of individually in this section, so as not to delay publication, but general statements about the archive are made with awareness of the content of the new texts. Also not included here, though probably deriving from the same archive (Pedersén 1985, 81), is MARV 1.10 concerned with arrows (*šiltāhu*).

² A full assessment of the data from the archive must await the publication and edition of many further texts from these groups in Berlin being prepared by Prof. E. Cancik-Kirschbaum, and also further pieces from Istanbul which will soon be appearing in a volume edited by V. Donbaz.

³ An area was opened in 1988–9 directly to the east of the original excavations (Dittman 1990, 161–5). A few further texts from here are being prepared for publication by Prof. K. Kessler. It proved difficult to reunite the newly exposed architectural remains (as planned in Abb. 1–2 on pp. 158–9) with the surviving plans of Andrae's work. Work continued in the same area in 2001 (Schmidt 2002), in the course of which the approximately 200 fragmentary Middle Assyrian tablets were recovered; their precise location in relation to the level IIIjünger architecture has not yet been published, but it does not sound from the reports as though they were in a primary context.

texts already available allow us to reconstruct a good deal about the stewards and their establishment, giving a vivid impression of the activities which generated this archive, and this impression is broadly confirmed by Pedersén's account of the subject matter of many of the still unpublished pieces. What virtually all the tablets in this archive have in common is that they are concerned with the movement of material commodities through the state system, and in the relatively rare cases where a manager is given his title, it is "steward" (AGRIG).⁴ One of these was called Samnuḫa-ašared and Ass. 13058 has sometimes been referred to as his archive, but the texts now available make it clear that he is neither the earliest nor the latest steward involved, and it seems preferable to refer to all the Ass. numbers from here collectively as the "Stewards' Archive".

The Stewards

The first eighteen texts in Table 4.5 are grouped together because they have a steward named as one of the principals in the transaction.⁵ Collating the data from this archive and from other sources the succession of stewards known to us at present reads:⁶

Ibašši-ilu
Ištar-tuballissu
Kidīn-Enlil
Nabu-bela-ušur⁷

⁴ "Steward" is my rendering of the profession written AGRIG (IGI+DUB) (often without the determinative LÚ). In earlier decades this was understood to stand for the Akkadian *abarakku*, but for first-millennium texts it is now generally accepted that it should be rendered *mašennu*. This reading has also been adopted for Middle Assyrian by Jakob (2003 94¹⁸⁰), noting that the word *mašennu* is attested written syllabically at Nuzi; see also CAD A/i, 35), but as he says, certainty is impossible at present. In the circumstances, it seems simplest to use the English word "steward" which agrees very well with the known function of the AGRIG. *The Chambers Dictionary* (1994, 1693) offers "a person who manages the domestic concerns of a family or institution; one who superintends another's affairs, esp. an estate or farm". It is perhaps worth noting that in mediaeval England the Lord High Steward was "one of the great officers of state, and anciently the first officer of the crown in England" (Chambers 1994, s.v. steward).

⁵ No. 25, which mentions Nabu-bela-ušur with the title AGRIG, is listed in Group II because of the connection with a *sāpi'u*.

⁶ The list for the 12th century was established in Freydank 1991d, 72–3, with further details on individual stewards on pages 65–6 (Adad-riba), 73–8 and 88–89 (Apliya), and elaborated and extended backwards in time in Jakob 2003, 108. By comparison with Jakob's list, I have (1) retained Ištar-tuballissu position in the 13th century (he is now also attested in Ass. 2001.D.2402 Frahm 2002, 84, but assigned there to the mid 12th century following Freydank); (2) added Kidīn-Enlil (from texts 1 and 2); (3) left Ušur-namkur-šarri (attested year 40 at Aššur (title AGRIG only on seal so not decisive, Fischer 1999, 128, 2); year 31 or 38 with title AGRIG at Tell Ali, Ismail & Postgate 2008 No. 24E:18) after Nabu-bela-ušur (attested years 26 [Mušallim-Adad] and 45 [Ber-išmanni]); (4) omitted Adad-uma'i (only attestation as AGRIG is according to Freydank 1991d, 73²⁰⁰ "sehr fraglich"); (5) retained UD-*p/bu*, now attested in Ass. 2001.D.1933 (Frahm 2002, 85); (6) inserted Šamaš-aḫa-iddina, attested in Ass. 2001.D.2036 (Frahm 2002, 74–5) and 2276 (Frahm 2002, 81–2, eponym Ninurta-apil-ekur); (7) omitted the son of Ḫabḫayu from Stele 68, its date being uncertain. Not included: Dayyan-bel-Ekur LÚ.AGRIG (MARV 4.78:39 from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta see Llop 2010c, 351), and Šilli-uraše AGRIG (MARV 8.57:6–7 from Pedersén's archive M13 found in a house about 140 metres south of the Ištar Temple, eponym Aššur-qarrad assigned to Aššur-uballiṭ, but this seems dubious).

⁷ On this name see Jakob 2003, 105–6. Nabu-bel-[...] MARV 8.14:rev.6' may be our man, but the end of his name and title (if used) are broken. He is now also found handling leather goods in MARV 10.29, and his "House" is probably listed in MARV 10.60:5.

Ušur-namkur-šarri
 UD-b/pu
 Adad-riba
 Šamaš-aḫa-iddina
 Saggi'u
 Samnuḫa-ašared⁸
 Apliya⁹

While it is noticeable that Ištar-tuballissu and UD-*p/bu* are not represented among the published tablets from Groups C and F, but do feature in the 2001 texts from a different context, we cannot make a simple division into “early” (for 2001) and “late” (for the Andrae tablets) because Šamaš-aḫa-iddina is only attested in the 2001 texts while Kidin-Enlil in No. 1 from Group C probably belongs in the earlier part of Shalmaneser's reign. Moreover, very similar texts dealing with similar materials come from each major group, so that they cannot be convincingly divided on the basis of their content. The publication of further texts will no doubt change the picture in detail, but we are even now entitled to say that the texts from all sectors of this general context derive from the activities of the stewards over the best part of two centuries, stretching from well before the accession of Tukulti-Ninurta (in 1243 BC) right through the 12th century into the reigns of Tiglath-pileser and (in the case of Nos. 28-9) Aššur-bel-kala, who came to the throne in 1073 BC. Apliya, the last of our list, bears the title Chief Steward (see Nos. 15-17).¹⁰ Presumably this enhancement of his title is intended to differentiate the palace's steward from other stewards in provincial contexts or private households (cf. Freydank 1991d, 72¹⁹⁸). That at least two of the stewards included their title of (chief) steward on their stele indicates that it was seen as an important office of state, and this is confirmed by the fact that most of the holders of this post are also attested as eponyms. Only Šamaš-aḫa-iddina is not known as the name of an eponym, and although for the other names in one case or another we might have to allow for namesakes – and despite the lack of filiations – there can be no real doubts about figures like Nabu-bela-ušur, Ušur-namkur-šarri, Saggi'u (who was possibly the son of the king mentioned receiving a grindstone from Adad-riba in No. 5) and finally Apliya (eponym in MARV 10.74).

The documents in the archive span the activities of some ten stewards. Whether we assume that all these tablets were found where they originally belonged, so that the steward's office

⁸ In MARV 5.27, 5.41, 5.44 and 8.78:9 from the reign of Tiglath-pileser we meet another Samnuḫa-ašared, son of Sin-šumu-lešir; he is associated with offerings from Šadikanni, and it cannot be coincidental that the god Samnuḫa is known to be associated with that city (see simply PNA 3/i, 1085–5). Like Freydank (1991d, 168), I hardly think this can be the same person, but it seems possible that he was related (e.g. grandson), and one wonders whether the preceding Samnuḫa-ašared also hailed from Šadikanni, and owed his high position to some delicate political relationship.

⁹ In addition Pedersén states that Apliya is attested “as responsible for material belonging to the palace” in two other “dispositions” from Ass. 13058 (his numbers 143 and 172) (1985, 72). He is mentioned in seventeen of the tablets published in MARV 10; see also Freydank 1991d, 88–9.

¹⁰ This title is also listed on Stele 68 by the son of Ḫabḫayu, whose own name is broken, but who also claims the titles of *tartānu*, *rab ēkalli* and *šaknu*. He is perhaps also relatively late in the sequence, but cf. Saporetti 1979a, 99 for an earlier date.

was operating throughout this time from the same physical location, or allow for the possibility that some of the earlier texts were transferred here from a different building, the fact remains that the documentary output of all these officials ended up in the same place, so they should be seen as the archive of the steward's office, rather than the personal archive of each of the individuals who held the post. None of the documents currently published from the different groups shows any signs of being concerned with the private affairs of any of our stewards, and one has to assume that each had his own personal and private establishment, no doubt elsewhere within the city of Aššur.

The (chief) stewards were plainly among the high officers of state, and still in the 9th and 8th centuries BC the steward was ranked fourth in the state hierarchy, after the *turtānu*, the Palace Herald and the Chief Butler.¹¹ The activities of the Chief Steward in first-millennium Assyria are described in Mattila (2000, 20ff.), and the attestations of stewards in Middle Assyrian texts are comprehensively reported in Jakob (2003, 94-110). Our best information about their duties at this time comes largely from this very archive, although the texts from Tell Sabi Abyad promise to be equally revealing of the role of stewards in large households, and we will therefore be in a better position to describe their role in the state apparatus after we have witnessed some of the transactions in which our stewards were involved and have seen how their establishment functioned.

The Texts

Transactions Involving the Steward (Texts 1-19)

Given that many documents from this general context remain unpublished it would not be sensible to attempt a comprehensive account at this stage. Instead, the individual texts included in Group I because they directly involve one of the stewards will be briefly described in turn, providing a sample of their range of activities. It will become apparent that they reflect a variety of situations which cannot be rigidly classified, so that the texts themselves do not follow a strict formula. In some cases the commodity is stated to be “of the palace” and “in the charge of” (*ša qāt*) the steward, but in other instances the palace's ownership is not made explicit, and the steward may be receiving rather than issuing the item.

No. 1: MARV 5.85 Sealed tablet. Kidin-Enlil, the steward, issues goods to the value of twenty talents of lead (AN.NA) belonging to the palace to two (or three?) travelling merchants (*šamallāḫē*). “On (their) return from the expedition they shall have” the lead “passed before the king”¹² and draw up their accounts, after which they will have acquitted their obligation and may break their tablet. The round

¹¹ As clearly visible in the eponym sequence, cf. Postgate 1995b, 4.

¹² These lines read *ina tuār harrāni* AN.N[A (x)]x *mi-it-ḫar-šu a-na* [...] -BE-te [AN.N]A x[(x)] *mi-it-ḫar-šu ana pāni šarri ušētuqū*. Unfortunately there are no parallels allowing a convincing restoration of the broken signs, but it seems that while some of their haul, amounting to double the initial capital (*mithāršu*), is to be passed before the king, another part, also doubled, is (to be passed?) *ana* [...] *bete*, which I am unable to restore. Puzzling is that AN.NA seems to have occurred in both l. 21' and l. 23', but perhaps one or the other read AN.NA BABBAR (“white lead, tin”) while the other refers to mere “lead” (plain AN.NA). For the use of *šētuqu* in administrative texts cf. No. 31 (KAJ 248):15 *a-na šē-tu-q[i]* and MARV 9.77:7' [*ana pāni*] LUGAL *ú-še-ti-qu-ni* [.

Table 4.5. *Published texts from Ass. 13058 (and some from Ass. 21101)*

Group I: Texts Involving Known Stewards									
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
No.	Pedersén	Text	Commodity	1st party	2nd/3rd party	<i>t. i.</i>	Seal	Eponym	
1	C.59	MARV 5.85	lead	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Kidin-Enlil LÚ. AGRIG	2(+) traders (<i>šamallā'u</i>)	Y	Y	Abi-ili, s. of Aššur- šumu-lešer ² (Sa)	
2	(-)	MARV 9.71	almond	[<i>ša</i>] <i>ēkalli</i> [<i>ša qāt</i>] Kidin-Enlil LÚ.AGRIG	[...] -Aššur, oil presser	Y	Y	[-----]	
3	(-)	Donbaz 1988a, No. 5	<i>Marinu</i> , felt ² , madder, silver	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Nabu-bela-ušur [...] AGRIG	Šamaš-amranni	N	Y	Mušallim-Adad (26)	
4	(-)	MARV 8.81	30 ⁷ minas <i>kantappu</i>	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Adad-riba LÚ. AGRIG	A'il-Ištar <i>ša namšarāte</i> <i>ana iškārišu</i>	N	Y	Ḫaburraru (~1200)	
5	C.145 ²	MARV 8.1	grindstones	<i>ina abat</i> Adad-riba [Adad-riba AGRIG	various PN's	N	N	Ḫaburraru (~1200)	
6	C.81	MARV 3.8	woven cloth & carpets			[---]	N	Enlil-kudurri-ušur (Eku)	
7	F.231	KAJ 299	sesame	Adad-riba	[5 PN's ?]	[---]	N	[-----]	
8	F.178	MARV 2.22	oils	Tukulti-ša-šamê, perfumer	Saggi'u AGRIG	N	N	Ragišššanu (Nae)	
9	F.187	MARV 5.47	<i>Ilku</i> arrowheads	<i>ša qāt</i> Qupiteni	Samnuḫa-ašared AGRIG	N	N	ḪabbaKAR' (Nae/Ad)	
10	C.30	MARV 1.72	<i>ilku</i> arrowheads	<i>ana pī našperte ša</i> Samanuḫa-ašared AGRIG	Alsauri, envoy of Ikkaru	N	N	[-----]	
11	(-)	MARV 1.51	oil	Samnuḫa-ašared AGRIG	Chief Perfumers	N	N	Atamar-den-Aššur + Adad-mušabši (Ad)	
12	C.38	MARV 3.46 Photo Opitz 1935-6-	glue, sinews etc.	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Samnuḫa-ašared AGRIG	8 Chief Bowyers <i>ana iškārišunu</i>	Y	Y	Sin-šeya (Ad)	
13	F.255	KAJ 129 cf. Freydank 1982d, 65	bronze tools	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Samnuḫa-ašared AGRIG	Ninuayu, shoe-maker	Y	nail	Taḫ[ul]u (Ad)	
14	C.68	MARV 1.43 cf. Pedersén 1985, 74	A. bronze vessels B. scrap metal	A. <i>ana pī našperte ša</i> [PN] B. Samnuḫa-ašared	A. Aššur-šuma-iddina B. [-----]	N N	N	Ikkaru (~1150)	
15	C.165	MARV 1.23	cedar (wood ²) ⁺	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Apliya AGRIG GAL	Babu-šuma-eriš	Y	Y	[Taklak]-ana-Aššur (Tp)	
16	(-)	MARV 9.70	spices etc.	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Apliya AGRIG GAL-e	Natḫayu <i>bēl pāḫite ša pī</i> <i>nāmīri</i>	N	Y	Gadiu (Tp)	
17	F.230	KAJ 298 = MARV 3.67 cf. Freydank 1985c	bronze hatchet	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Apliya AGRIG GAL-e	Katmuḫaeen gardener	N	N	[-----]	
18	C.113	MARV 1.64	pairs ² of animal skins	[<i>š</i>] <i>a ēkalli ša qāt</i> [PN] AGRIG	[-----]	[---]	Y	[-----]	

Group II: Texts Involving Felt Makers (*sāpi'ū*)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
No.	Pedersén	Text	Commodity	1st party	2nd/3rd party	<i>t. i.</i>	Seal	Eponym (King)
19	C.175	MARV 2.19	sheep + goat skins	Amurru-šuma-ušur <i>rab sāpiē</i>	N	N	N	Usat-Marduk (20) + Enlil-ašared (21)
20	C.78	MARV 3.7	sheep + goat skins & sinews	<i>ša qāt</i> Mušabši-Sebetti <i>sāpiē</i>	Ušur-namkur-šarri + Ubru <i>ana ēkalli maḥrū</i>	N	N	Qibi-Aššur, s. Ibašši-ilu (25)
21	C.159	MARV 3.59	2 units felt	<i>ša qāt</i> Amurru-šuma-ušur <i>rab sāpiē</i>	Ušur-namkur-šarri + Adad- šumu-lešir <i>ana ēkalli maḥrū</i>	N	N	Qibi-Aššur, s. Ibašši-ilu (25)
22	C.54	MARV 3.53	310 felt hats	<i>ša</i> Amurru-šuma-ušur <i>rab sāpiē</i>	Ušur-namkur-šarri + Ubru <i>ana ēkalli maḥrū</i>	N	N	Adad-bel-gabbe DUMU LUGAL (27)
23	C.(-)	MARV 3.57	3 units felt	<i>ša qāt</i> Amurru-šuma-ušur <i>rab sāpiē</i>	Adad-šumu-lešir + Pira[du] <i>ana ēkalli maḥrū</i>	N	N	Šunu-qardu (28)
24	C	VAT 19545 Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999a, 92	goat and sheep skins ZA-ri-ú-[<i>tu</i>]	<i>ša pi-ti</i> [PN] <i>rab sā[piē]</i>	[.....]	[N]	?	[.....]
25	C	VAT 19549 Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999a, 92-3	<i>zi-pu-tu</i> and(?) [š] <i>ingu</i>	<i>ša ēkalli ša qāt</i> Nabu-bela-ušur AGRIG	<i>ina qāt</i> Ištar-šuma-ereš [s] <i>āpiē</i> <i>ana ʾaāʾe tadnaššu</i>	[Y]	?	[.....]
26	C	VAT 19554 Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999a, 93	10 talents “good wool” from unshorn sheepskins	<i>ša qāt</i> Qibi-Aššur [but Faist 2001, 89 ³⁶ reports this as the name of the eponym (cf. No. 21)]	Mušabši-Sebetti [<i>sāp</i>] <i>iē</i>	[?]	Y	[.....]

(continued)

Table 4.5. (*cont.*)

Group III: Other Texts									
A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	
No.	Pedersén	Text	Commodity	1st party	2nd/3rd party	<i>t. i.</i>	Seal	Eponym (King)	
27	F.(-)	MARV 5.45	honey, butter	N	Nabu-SUM.SI.PAB [<i>ša</i>] UGU KÛ. SIG ₁₇	N	N	Berê (Ari)	
28	F.185	MARV 2.28	medical herbs	N	Aššur-išmanni, the exorcist	N	N [?]	Ili-iddina (Abk)	
29	F.224	MARV 1.42	medical herbs	N	Aššur-išmanni, the exorcist	N	Y	Ili-iddina (Abk)	
30	F.(-)	MARV 5.46	medical herbs	N	N	N	N	N	
31	A.2	BAM 254	list of medical plants	N	N	N	N	N	
32	C.93	MARV 5.69	aromatics	2 gardeners	N	N	N	[-----]	
33	(-)	MARV 3.72	aromatics (<i>piršaduḫu</i>)	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	[-]	[-----]	
34	F.239	KAJ 248, coll. Freydank 1991d, 98 ²⁶⁰	aromatics, oil	PN	Buniya, City Scribe <i>ana iškāri ša lime Mušezeb-[Aššur]</i>	N	N	Erib-Aššur (Tp)	
35	F.229	KAJ 300	GIŠ.ŠE.KÍN for oil	[-----]	Batqiya, <i>šileppayu</i>	N	N	Ninurta-aḫa-iddina [?] (Tp) ^x	
36	F.235	KAJ 275	GIŠ.ŠE.KÍN, wood, oxen, sheep & goat skins	[-----]	Ki[....] Aplīya	[---]	N [?]	Ippitte (Freydank 1991d, 98 ²⁶²) (Tp)	
37	C.28	MARV 1.34	glue + tendons	N	Ḫinibu and chariot-carpenters <i>ana iškāri ša 4 ša šadādi</i>	N	N	Aššur-apla-iqiša (Ad [?])	
38	B.5	MARV 2.15	sinews for chariots	<i>ša qāt Kutti sēpi</i> [	[-----] <i>ana iškāri ša 3 GIŠ.GIGIR</i> [	[-----]	N	[-----]	
39	C.47	Donbaz 1976, 25-6 A.1828	glue + tendons	N	Papsukkal-kena-ušur	N	[N]	Sin-šeya (Ad)	
40	C.71	MARV 3.77	sheep skins	N	Zizi, leather-worker (<i>aškāpu</i>)	N	N	Erib-[---]	
41	C.78	MARV 1.59	goat skins	N	Adad-uballiṭ (et al.?)	[-----]	N	[-----]	
42	F.240	KAJ 250	leather flask	N	Šamši-lu-da'an, confectioner	N	N	N	
43	(-)	MARV 5.61	dyed wool	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	N	Nabu-bela-ušur (19)	
44	C.49	MARV 1.54	wool for <i>šingu</i>	[-----]	[-]	[-----]	N	Aššur-šal[limšunu] (Ari/Tp)	
45	C.144	Donbaz 1988a No. 4	dyed wool	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	N	Ibri-šarri (Tp)	
46	C.137	Donbaz 1988a No. 6	madder						

47	B.7	MARV 2.16	madder + alum	[ša] ēkalli [ša qāt] P[N]	[-----]	[-----]	N	Libu[rʿ(...)] (Ad ²)
48	C.9 bis	MARV 3.13	textiles	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	N	Šunu-qardu (28)
49	F.236	KAJ 276	textiles	N	ana É.GAL-lim tadnā	N	N	Mudammeq-Bel (Tp)
50	C.92	MARV 1.24	textiles & dyed wool	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	Y	[Aššur]-nirari, uklu
51	C.25	MARV 3.12	garments	N	P[N] targu[manni] KUR ha[ttāyi] ki rimutte	N	N	Libur-zanin-[Aššur] (29)
52	F.241	KAJ 273 = MARV 3.71	garments	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	N	[-----]
53	C.37	MARV 1.67	[straw?]	[-----]	[-----]	Y	[N]	Adad-uballiṭ (Nae ²)
54	C.39	MARV 1.30	grindstones	N	captives of the Cook's House ana iškārišunu	N	N	Erib-Aššur (~1150)
55	C.9	MARV 3.69	grindstones	[-----]	brewers and alahḫinu ana iškārišunu	N	N	[-----]
56	C.61	MARV 1.63	arrowheads	N	Adad-bilti-[...] maḫir, ana PN ša muḫhi É tilli ^{mes} ... tadnū	N	N	Ibri-šarri, turtānu rabiū (Tp)
57	I.252	MARV 1.10	arrowheads ša qāt šarri	N	Adad-apla-iddina, chariotry overseer	N	Y	Ḫayašayu (Tp)
58	F.(-)	MARV 5.81	scraper (maḫlušu)	N	[-----]	N	N	N
59	(-)	MARV 3.19	copper ingots	N	N	N	N	Ilu-qarrad (Sa)
60	F.233	KAJ 249 cf. Freydank 1979, 1985c	lead, bronze for 50 axes	N	Mušraeans (KUR mu-uš-ri-a[-a])	N	N	Sin-[apla-iddina] ⁺ (Tp)
61	C.45	MARV 3.2	bronze, tin, for men, horses, skins	N	Merchants and šamallā'ū	N	N	[-----]
62	(-)	MARV 3.78	bronze for dyed wool	Queen (DAM LUGAL)?	[-----]	[N]	N	[-----]
63	(-)	MARV 3.81	lead	[-----]	[-----]	[N]	N	[-----]
64	(-)	MARV 3.82	[unknown] house price	[-----]	[-----]	N	N	Salma[nu-...]
65	C.100	MARV 1.53	lapis lazuli ornament	Ninurta-apil-Ekur, King of Assyria	Muballiṭat-[Šerua] his daughter, priestess of [...]	N	Y	[.....]

(continued)

Group III (*cont.*)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
No.	Pedersén	Text	Commodity	1st party	2nd/3rd party	<i>t. i.</i>	Seal	Eponym (King)
66	C.147	MARV 1.55 = KAV 176	[-----]	[-----]	Various temples	[N]	N	[-----]
67	C.75	MARV 1.35	[-----]	N	14+ men	Y	Y	[-----]
68	C.143	MARV 3.63	citizenship statement		(Ušur-namkur-šarri)	N	N	[Aššur ² -]da'an (35)
69	C.122	MAOG 3/i-ii, 36-8	list of 35 PNs with towns	N	N	N	N	N
70	C.114	MARV 1.65	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	Y	Usat-Marduk (20)
71	F(-)	MARV 5.82	(cultic text)			[N]	N	[-----]

Notes to the Tables.

Col. A: Text numbering used in this chapter, Groups I and II are arranged chronologically as far as possible. Group III is arranged by type of commodity

Col. B: These are the groups and numbers assigned to tablets in Archive M7 in Pedersén 1985, I, 68-81. His Group A (Nos. 1-2) are Ass. 12978; Group B (Nos. 3-8) Ass. 12979-80; Group C (Nos. 9-179) Ass. 13058; Group F (Nos. 182-245) Ass. 21101, Group I (Nos. 250-5) wrong Ass. numbers.

Col. C: Text publication.

Col. E: Where relevant, person owning, responsible for or issuing the commodity. N in this column means no owner is stated.

Col. F: Where relevant, person receiving, owing or otherwise involved in the transaction.

Col. G: Text includes *tuppušu ihappi* “he shall break his tablet” or equivalent phrase. [N] means text is broken but would not have included this phrase.

Col. H: Y = tablet is recorded as having seal impression. N = no seal impression recorded. For tablets not published by H. Freydank this is not decisive evidence that it was unsealed.

Col. I: Eponym. Bold figures, e.g. (20) refer to the ordered list in Röllig 2008:5 (see Appendix 2; the accession year of Tukulti-Ninurta is year (24)). Assignment to kings outside this list generally follows Freydank 1991d: **Sa**=Shalmaneser **TN**=Tukulti-Ninurta **Ad** = Aššur-dan **Eku**=Enlil-kudurri-ušur **Nae** = Ninurta-apil-Ekur **Ari** = Aššur-reša-iši **Tp** = Tiglath-pileser I **Abk**=Aššur-bel-kala

N = not present

[-----] = tablet broken

blank space = no information

* For this eponym see recently Llop 2008b.

* For the difficulty of knowing whether this commodity is cedar wood or resin, see CAD E, 279a.

* For the reading of this eponym's name here and the assignation to Tiglath-pileser see Freydank 1991d, 99²⁶³ and 158, listing three other Ass. 21101 tablets from the same year.

* For this eponym see Freydank 1991d, 167-8, in Ass. 13058 gf. The mentions of Mušru and Araziqu in KAJ 249 point to Tiglath-pileser.

figure of 20 talents suggests that this was a commission, with a capital sum advanced from the royal coffers, and the occurrence of *mithāršu* in ll. 21' and 23' suggests that they were required to deliver double the initial capital. For more on this type of enterprise see, p. 173.

No. 2: MARV 9.71 Sealed tablet. Kidin-Enlil issues a product of the almond tree (*šuqudu*). The tablet is very broken, but one of the presumed recipients was an oil presser, and the *ku]-ul-lu ša šuq-di* (*kullu* already known from Aššur-našir-apli's banquet stele) refers to the kernel from which almond oil was to be extracted. In any case, processing work was probably required of one recipient as the text ends with [*tuppušu i-lḫ*] *ap-pi* "he may (then) break his tablet".

No. 3: Donbaz 1988a No. 5 Sealed tablet. One *marinu* cloth of purple wool of the king's chair, weighing 14½ minas, 14 minas of madder,¹³ and 4¾ minas of silver belonging to the palace are issued by Nabu-bela-ušur the steward to Šamaš-amranni (whose profession may have been given in the broken line 10) "for dyeing" (*a-na ša-ra-be tadnaššu*). This is understandably the editor's interpretation, but it seems odd that an item already made of purple wool (*takiltu*) should need dyeing. The item *ma-ri-nu* is probably mentioned in MARV 10.20, where 26 *duḫšiu* leather items are destined *a-na KUŠ ma-[ri-ni]*, but not otherwise attested in the Middle Assyrian corpus. At Mari it seems to have been a leathern bag; it may therefore be advisable to emend l. 1 very slightly and transliterate 1 *ma-ri-nu ša ta-ḫap-še'* (in place of *ta-kil-te*) "1 bag of felt".

No. 4: MARV 8.81 Sealed tablet. Thirty minas of an unidentified substance (*kantappu'*) belonging to the palace, "in the charge of" Adad-riba the steward, issued to a threshing-sledge maker (*ša namšarāte*) as his work-assignment (*iškāru*) for the eponymate of Ḫaburraru. Apparently otherwise undated.

No. 5: MARV 8.1 This badly damaged and unsealed tablet seems to have been a list of persons to whom grindstones have been issued (*tadnāni*) "together with their mullers" ([N]A₄.UR₅.MEŠ [*a-di nār-ki-bi-ši-na*, ll. 21-2 restored after l. 12) "on the order of (*ina abat*) Adad-riba" (l. 22). His title is not preserved, but like No. 4 the tablet is dated to Ḫaburraru, and it seems certain that this is the same man. The principal interest of this text may prove to be the identity of the recipients: they include Saggiu, son of the king (l. 17, conceivably himself later a steward), another son of the king, holding the title of "representative" (*qēpu*, l. 14), and a physician (LÚ.A.ZU, l. 20). At first sight it may seem surprising that such individuals should be issued as humble an item as a grindstone, but presumably they came under the patronage of the palace and had households requiring their own kitchen equipment. In its broken state, it is impossible to say whether this is an account referring to separate issues over a period of time, or to a single occasion on which a number of recipients received their grindstones at the same time.

No. 6: MARV 3.8 A relatively large unsealed tablet, much of it ruled into two-line sections. The badly damaged text mentions textiles, giving their dimensions in cubits, along with the materials of textile manufacture including dyed wool, madder and alum. Some of the textiles are "of weaver's work" (*ša KIN UŠ.BAR*); others, including carpets or tapestries (*mardutu*), are "of knotter's work" (*ša KIN KA.ŠĒR*).¹⁴ The final section before the date runs: "All this (is) the clothing of Ištar of Arbail, which the king ordered (to go?) to Adad-riba, the steward, to administer" (*mimma an[ni]u lubultu ša dIštar ša uruArbail ʾšaʾ ana 1.dIM-riba AGRIG [LUG]AL ana ša-aš-bu-te iqbi'ūni*). As one might expect, these were clearly luxury items, some of which were decorated with "stumbling ibex"

¹³ The Assyrian *ḫūrutu* (GĪŠ.ḪAB) is identified with "madder", used by dyers, as the Latin name *Rubia tinctorum* indicates (Stol 1980–3, §23).

¹⁴ The same terminology, *šipar išpāri* and *šipar kāširi*, is used in the Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta inventory text edited in Köcher 1957–8.

(*ar-me ħa-am-mu-ru-[te*, l. 29') and "stumbling stags" (*a-<a->-li ħa-ṛmuṛ-ru-te*, l. 27'), motifs which also feature on the elaborate tapestries listed in the lengthy inventory text from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (Köcher 1957-8).

No. 7: KAJ 299 A fragment only, listing amounts of sesame "of" (*ša*) individuals, the last of whom is Adad-riba. The sesame is "from out of the sesame which is under the authority of the oil presser" (*ša pi-ti ŠE¹⁵ IÀ.SUR*) ..." but no other useful details remain.

No. 8: MARV 2.22 On this unsealed tablet Saggi'u the steward is named as the recipient of (*maḥir*) a series of amounts totalling just over one homer of two kinds of oil on different occasions, over a period of at least 8 months. The oil is either "myrtle oil" (IÀ *a-si*) or "purified oil" (IÀ *ma-su-ú*), used apparently interchangeably, and totalled together as just "oil" (IÀ.MEŠ = *šamnu*) at the end of the document. The summary reads as follows:

ŠU.NÍGIN 1 ANŠE 3 ½ *qa* IÀ.MEŠ *ša* ŠU ^{munus}GIŠ.TUKUL-*ti-ša-AN-e*
mu-ra-qi-te tal-pi-tu ša iš-tu ITI *a-pu*-MAN.MEŠ-*ni*
 UD.2.KÁM *li-me* ^{1d}MAŠ-DUMU.ÚS-SUM-*na*
a-di ITI *al-la-na-te* UD.20.KÁM *li-me* ¹*ra-giš-ša-ni*
a-na tal-pi-ṛti É².GAL²-*lim* ¹*sa-gi-ú* AGRIG *ma-ḥi-ir*

"Total: 1 homer 3½ *qû* oil, in the charge of Tukulti-ša-šame, the perfumer, expenditure for the period from the month of Apu-šarrani, 2nd day, eponymate of Ninurta-apla-iddina until the month of Allannatu, 20th day, eponymate of Ragiššanu, for the expenditure of the palace(?),¹⁵ Saggi'u, the steward, has received".

The essence of this document is therefore that it lists amounts of oil provided by the female perfume maker Tukulti-ša-šame (for whom see No. 11). The ultimate destination of the individual amounts is described in detail in ruled sections. The second entry lists a libation of oil "poured for" [or "over"?] "him, on the day Izzaziya the priest died",¹⁶ and similar funerary libations for a daughter of the queen and another male (name broken) are listed in the third and fourth sections. The first entry records "3 *sūtu* of myrtle oil, poured (*tabbuk*) in the House of Aššur on the feet of the gods, on the day the king defeated the Muskaean troops at the town of Quba-of-the-Forts of the land of Ḫanigalbat". In the fifth entry the details of the libation are lost, but the text continues with the information that "It was issued to the Qat[tunaeen?] Sutian who brought news to the king of the Nešḫa[ean] Sutian(s)". The remaining sixth to tenth entries are too damaged to yield helpful details.

What transpires from this text is that oil required by the state for these cultic events, and supplied by the perfumer over a period of about 8 months, is recorded as being "received" by the steward. It seems likely that the data used to compile this statement came from the perfumer herself, and that she, rather than Saggi'u, had provided the separate consignments directly to those carrying out the libations, because if she merely supplied myrtle oil and purified oil on a regular basis to the steward, and the steward then provided the individual amounts from the

¹⁵ For the restoration of É.GAL-*lim* here compare No. 11, where l. 13' complements this passage.

¹⁶ *in[a] ūmi Izzaziya SANGA metūni ana [U]GU-šu tabik*, l.l. 4-5.

resultant stock, either the details of the events in question would not be known, or there would be no need for Tukulti-ša-šame's involvement in the document. In other words, this document is a "paper transaction" in which the steward accepts nominal liability for these amounts without their necessarily passing through his hands. The tablet is unsealed, and this is therefore a unilateral record intended for the internal use of his establishment.

No. 9: MARV 5.47 Also an unsealed text recording the steward's receipt of 513 arrowheads weighing $1\frac{1}{2}$ shekels (~12 g.) each, in the charge of Qupitēni. They have been brought to the palace (*ana ēkalli ittablūni*) by three named persons (Sin-murabbi, Urđi and Urad-Kube) "and the smiths", and Samnuḫa-ašared, the steward, has received them. The arrowheads are specified as "of state service" (*ša ilki*, l. 3), a qualification also applied to arrows in No. 10 (another Samnuḫa-ašared text but from Ass. 21101), and this is reinforced by the phrase *ša ilki-šunu* "of their state service" in l. 10. We do not know enough about the *ilku* system to determine whether these contributions in kind are additional to or a substitute for service in person.¹⁷

The precise role of Qupitēni in this transaction is unclear, but like No. 8 this tablet appears to be a unilateral record for the steward's internal archive.

No. 10: MARV 1.72 2000 *ilku* arrows issued on the king's command (*ina abat šarri*) and "in accordance with the directive of Samnuḫa-ašared the steward" (*ana pī našperte ša S. AGRIG*). They were issued to Al'sauri, the envoy of Ikkaru, who may be the eponym of that name (as in No. 14; see Freydank 1991d, 140-1). The rest of this short text then lists four persons described as "representatives" (*qēpū[tu]*), whose role in the transaction is not made explicit. Unsealed, and without any conditions imposed on the recipient, this too must be a unilateral memorandum.

No. 11: MARV 1.51 Account concerning consumption of oil. The closing section reads as follows:

Rev. 7'-13'

[ŠU.NÍGIN x AN]ŠE 2BÁN 5 $\frac{1}{2}$ qa 3 ka-sa-tu ša ŠU 3 GAL.MEŠ
 [mu-ra-q]i-a-te^{mes} ša [Š]Ā[?] IĀ.MEŠ ša ^{1.d}sa-am-nu-ḫa-SAG AGRIG
 [iš-tu^{uu}]ki-li-zí ú-še-bi-la-ni ú-ma-si-a-ni tal-pi-tu
 [iš-tu] ITI ši-pi UD.25.KĀM li-me ¹a-ta-mar-DI-^daš-šur
 [a-di ITI] al-la-na-te UD.26.KĀM li-me ^{1.d}IM-mu-šab-ši
 [a-na tal-pi-ti]ti Ē.GAL-lim ta-din i+na tup-pi-ši-[n]a ša-bi-ti
 [()] ša muḫ-ḫi-ši-na ú-kar^L[-ru(-ú)]

"[Total x ho]mers 2 *sūtu* $5\frac{1}{2}$ qa 3 cups, in the charge of 3 Chief [Perf]umers, from out of the oil which Samnuḫa-ašared, the steward, brought [from] Kilizu (and) purified, expenditure from month Šippu, 25th day, eponym Atamar-den-Ašsur, until month Allānate, 26th day, eponym Adad-mušabši, issued as palace [expendit]ure. They shall deduct (this amount) from their formally executed tablet which is incumbent on them".

In the preceding ruled sections individual issues were listed, presumably from the three Chief Perfumers, the last one of whom is Tukulti-ša-šame, the female perfumer already encountered in No. 8. Both texts use the term *talpittu*: this refers to amounts which have been properly expended and thereby no longer require to be accounted for.

¹⁷ For such "*ilku* arrows" see No. 10, and also Frahm 2002, 76-7 Ass.2001.D-2218: 18', 23' (*ša ilki*).

This tablet is not formally dated, but ends with the bald instruction that the amount should be deducted from their *tuppu šabittu*, thus indicating that this is one component of a continuing bilateral relationship between the perfumers and the steward. It seems probable that the tablet in question would have been a regular sealed bilateral tablet, mentioning an amount of raw materials to be processed by the perfumers and obliging them to deliver the processed product, an obligation for the partial fulfilment of which this tablet constitutes evidence.

No. 12: MARV 3.46 Tablet sealed above the date on the reverse (for the impression see Figure 4.11). Sinews, glue and another commodity reckoned in pairs, belonging to the palace in the charge of (*ša qāt*) Samnuḫa-ašared issued to eight Chief Bowyers as their work-assignment (*ana iškāri-šunu*) for making 500 bows.¹⁸

Rev. 4'-13'¹⁹

PAB-ma 3 ME 75 NÍG.LÁ *pu*-[x (x x)]
3 GÜ.UN 29 MA.NA ŠE.Š[EN]
1 GÜ.UN 54 MA.NA *gi*-[du]

In total: 375 sets of h[orn(?)],
3 talents 29 minas of g[lue],
1 talent 54 minas of ten[dons],

(seal impression)

ša É.GAL-*lim* *ša* ŠU ^{1.d}*sa*-^f*ma*²-*nu*-*ha*¹-[SAG]
AGRIG *i*+*na* UGU 8 ÉRIN.MEŠ GAL.MEŠ
LÚ.ZADIM BAN.MEŠ *a*-*na* GIŠ.GÀR-*šu*-*nu*
ša 5 ME BAN.MEŠ *a*-*na* *e*-*pa*-*še*
ta-*ad*-*na*-*áš*-*šu*-*nu*
e-*pu*-*šu* *id*-*du*-*nu*
tup-*pu*-*šu*-*nu* *i*-*hap*-*pi*-[u]

of the palace, in the charge of Samanuḫa-[ašared],
the steward, owed by 8 men, Chief Bowyers.
For manufacturing their work-assignment
of 500 bows
it is issued to them.
They shall manufacture (them), deliver them,
(and then) may break their tablet.

(seal impression)

This tablet is itself the sealed bilateral document which they will be entitled to break once they have delivered their full assignment. It is unwitnessed, and the seal impressed on the reverse was presumably the same as that on the top of the obverse with the caption “Seal of Adad- ...” (perhaps one of the Chief Bowyers).

No. 13: KAJ 129 Bronze implements “belonging to the palace in the charge of (*ša qāt*) Samnuḫa-ašared the steward”, owed by Ninuayu the shoemaker. They had been issued to him for demolition work to be undertaken on the new capital of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta on the far side of the river. This is therefore resuming and reaffirming an obligation incurred by Ninuayu in the course of his duties on a previous occasion. This tablet has nail marks on it, in place of a seal, which may of course reflect on a shoemaker’s socio-economic standing.

¹⁸ See Freydank 1982d, 61–3. The tendons (*gīdu*) occur in other texts alongside the substance written ŠE.ŠEN by Middle Assyrian scribes, tentatively identified as a writing for ŠE.GIN = *šimtu* (CAD Š/iii, 9–10) “varnish” or perhaps here “glue” (see Freydank ad loc.; Frahm 2002, 79; also attested in the Babu-aḫa-iddina archive, texts 53 and 56).

¹⁹ See Freydank 1982d, 61–3; Jakob 2003, 101. The word *šimittu* means a yoke, but also a “set” or “pair” of things, but see the arithmetical argument of Frahm 2002, 79 (1.5 ibex horns per bow in Ass. 2001.D-2218) which strongly suggests that this word should refer to animal horns. Unfortunately there is no immediately obvious restoration of the word after NÍG.LÁ (= *šimittu*) beginning *b/pu*-[.

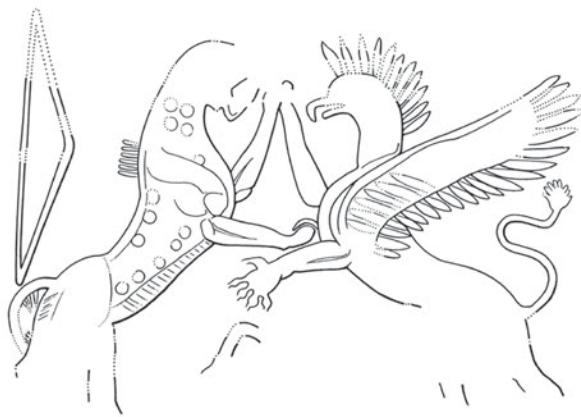
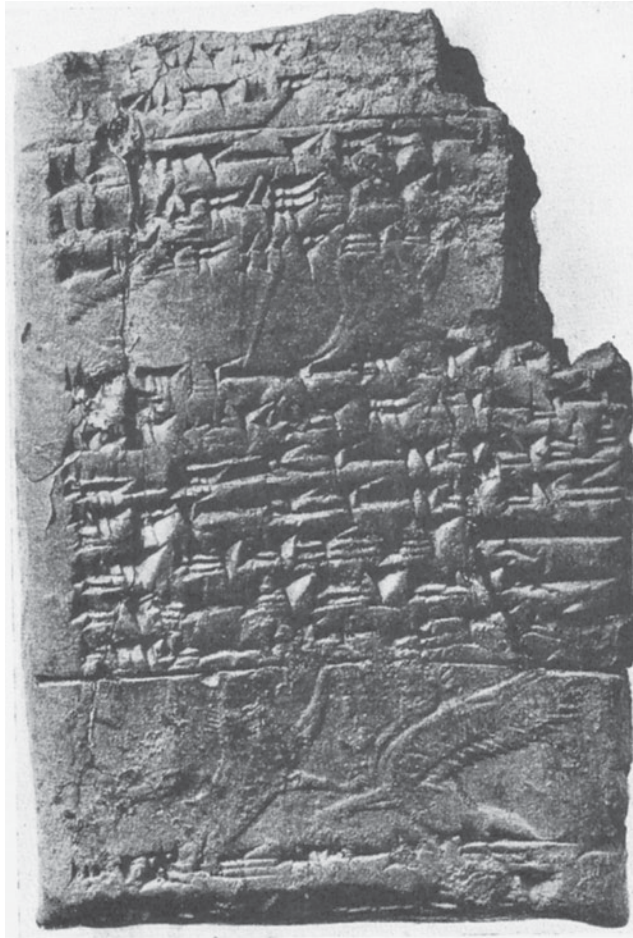


Figure 4.11. Seal impression on Reverse of VAT 15400 (Freydank, MARV 3.46). Photo after Opitz 1935–36, p. 50.

Drawing © Barbara Feller/Helga Kosak.

No. 14: MARV 1.43 Unsealed. This memorandum records two apparently unrelated transactions. In the first (ll. 1-13), Aššur-šuma-iddina is stated to have received two bronze cauldrons from an assemblage of bronze items allocated “for the notification of the decision of the Ḫabḫaeans” (*ana šikin tēmi ša KUR ḫa[b-ḫa-ie-e]*), these two presumably being presented “to the Ḫabḫaeen who [...] notified the decision” (*ana KUR ḫab-ḫa-ie-e ša [...] tēma iškunūni*). This is “in accordance with the directive of [PN]” (*ana pi našperte š[a PN]*). The lost name could well be that of Samnuḫa-ašared the steward (cf. No. 10), because he is probably mentioned in the second section of the text, where an unknown recipient is issued 20 minas of scrap bronze (ZABAR *ḫu-ša-ú*], cf. MARV 8.10, a tablet which may belong this archive).

No. 15: MARV 1.23 This document deserves to be cited in full:

(seal impression)	
1 ME 32 GÜ.UN 24 MA.NA <i>e-re-nu</i> ^{meš}	132 talents 24 minas of cedar,
<i>ša LÚ.DAM.GÀR.MEŠ iš-tu KUR ḫa-at-te</i>	which the merchants brought out
<i>ú-še-ši-ú-ni-ni</i>	from the land of Ḫatti,
<i>ša É.GAL-lim</i>	belonging to the palace,
<i>ša ŠU 'DUMU.ÚS-ia AGRIG GAL</i>	in the charge of Apliya, the Chief Steward,
<i>i+na UGU ^{1,d}KÁ-MU-KAM</i>	incumbent on Babu-šuma-ereš,
<i>DUMU qí-bi-^da-šur</i>	son of Qibi-Aššur.
<i>a-na UDU.SISKUR.MEŠ a-na ša-ra-pi</i>	For burning for sacrifices
<i>ta-ad-na-áš-šu</i>	it was issued to him.
<i>i-šar-rap ú-ga-mar</i>	He will burn it in its entirety,
<i>NÍG.KA₆.MEŠ-šu i-ša-bu-tu</i>	they will draw up his accounts,
<i>tup-pu-šu i-ḫap-pi</i>	<u>(and then) he may break his tablet.</u>
(seal impression)	
ITI [... UD.(x+)]2.KÁM <i>li-mu</i>	Month of [...] 2nd? day, eponymate of
<i>[¹ták]-^flak'-a-na-^da-šur</i>	Taklak-ana-Aššur.

With its seal impression, the explicit statement of ownership by the palace and administrative responsibility on the part of the steward, the filiation of the debtor, and the *tuppušu iḫappi* clause, this is a typical formalised bilateral document. Babu-šuma-ereš is accepting liability for a massive quantity (~3,967 kg) of cedar product; his professional role is unknown, but he must be on the staff of either a temple or the palace. Because his explicit duty involves the destruction of the commodity he is receiving, the system requires him to certify that it was correctly used by presenting his accounts.

No. 16: MARV 9.70 (Ass. number lost) Sealed. Three assorted culinary ingredients, comprising spices (*ra-qu*^{meš} GAL[(.MEŠ)], two conifer twigs (*ḫu-ša-a-bu ša ti-ia-l[i']*)²⁰ and a bowl of cumin (1 *dušpur-si-te*^{meš} *ka-mu-nu*) in the charge of Apliya, issued to Naḫayu, who is designated as an official of some kind (EN *pa-ḫi-te ša pi-i na-mi-ri*). This appears to be a simple memorandum of issue, but details to do with a female associated with the king are missing in the break, and in view of the sealing it may be a bilateral document.

²⁰ For these two entries cf. Frahm 2002, 72 on Ass. 2001.D-1933: plants collectively described as “spices”, and white cedar twigs handed out (“Kräuter ... alle zusammenfassend als *raqūtu* “Gewürze” bezeichnet. Außerdem werden “Weißzedernzweige” (*ḫuṣābū ša tiālī*) ausgehändigt”).

No. 17: KAJ 298 This note, which, like Nos. **9** and **13** also mentioning bronze, belongs to Ass. 21101, records that a single bronze axe or adze (*ḥaṣinnu*) belonging to the palace, in the charge of Apliya the steward, which was owed by a gardener, has been transported (*šēbul*) from the city of Kilizu by the palace overseer of Arbail. There is no mention of a seal impression (either by Ebeling or by Freydank who has collated it), and it merely records the transportation of the item, so this seems to be an internal memo, whose complicated background we are unlikely to be able to reconstruct. Compare **No. 13**, where also an employee is liable for a tool.

No. 18: MARV 1.64: quite possibly one of the stewards already listed. The tablet is badly damaged, but the items accounted for seem to amount to a total of 125 “pairs” (*šimittu*; see on **No. 12**) of skins of animals, including elephant (KUŠ *pi-ri*) and aurochs (KUŠ *ri-m[i]*).

The Chief Feltmaker (Texts 19-26)

Ass. 13058 also includes a small group of texts from the reigns of Shalmaneser and Tukulti-Ninurta in which the principal official involved is Amurru-šuma-ušur, who bears the title *rab sāpiē*, for which the translations “Chief Flayer” and “Chief Feltmaker” have been suggested.²¹

No. 19 (MARV 2.19) is a tabulation month by month of the skins of 5,200 sheep and 89 goats, delivered to him over a period of two years, “in accordance with the writing-boards of sacrifices of the sheep-fattener which he periodically received” (*ša pi lēāni ša SISKUR.MEŠ ša ša kurultīe ša imtaḥhurūni*). The list is summarised as “the drawn up accounts (*nikkassū šabtūtu*) of Amurru-šuma-ušur the Chief Feltmaker” (rev. 10’–13’). Felt is of course manufactured from wool. Most wool doubtless came from the annual shear of living animals, but evidently he was allocated the fleeces of sheep which had been fattened up and then slaughtered throughout the year, and was expected to process the skins himself. He must have been held responsible, and therefore have accounted for, both the wool and the skins, but this particular document is concerned with the skins alone.²² We are not told what happened to the skins, but to judge from **No. 20** they were passed on to other state authorities: here two persons take delivery “for the palace” of a mixture of sheep and goat skins and a large quantity of other animal by-products²³ which are “in the charge of Mušabši-Sebetti, son of Aḥu-damqu, the felt-maker”.²⁴ He is presumably the brother of Amurru-šuma-ušur, the Chief Feltmaker, whose father is also Aḥu-damqu, and he certainly belongs in the same administrative context because the two recipients are

²¹ For *sāpi’u* see Freydank, MARV 3, p. 12 on text no. 53 (here no. 22), pointing out that even if Deller’s rendering of Abdecker (Deller 1987, 62–3: animal “flayer” or “knacker”) is etymologically correct, in practice his activities extend much wider into dealing with the animal by-products. I retain the translation of “felt maker” suggested in Postgate 2000, 217 (and, independently Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999a, see there esp. p. 81 for Amurru-šuma-ušur), but recognise it may also be too specialised.

²² Which might tend to favour Deller’s translation. Note that the text continues in a broken passage to mention sixty-five and a half sacrificial oxen in connection with the towns of Arbail, Nineveh, Bet-belti and Isani, and ends with a note that “the sheep of the *kaššu* (and?) of the *našbutu* (-festival?) are not written ...”.

²³ The consignment includes twenty goatskins and thirty sheepskins *Zāri’utu*, more than 1700 sinews (UZUSA.SAL.MEŠ) and 3 talents 5 minas of tendons (*gīdu*). The texts use at least two words (*gīdu* and *šašallu*) which correspond approximately to the English words *sinew* and *tendon*, but the finer distinction between them (as indeed between the two English words) is not clear to me.

²⁴ For an edition see Faist 2001, 88, though her restorations in ll. 10 and 15 do not seem entirely convincing.

Uşur-namkur-šarri and Ubru, a pair who reappear as the recipients of the 310 felt hats (made by a Hittite craftsman) in No. 22, again using the unusual phrase “for the palace”.²⁵ Similarly in No. 21 two units of felt²⁶ weighing 16 minas were checked (*hi-tu'*) in front of Uşur-namkur-šarri and Adad-šumu-lešir and received by them “for the palace”, for the manufacture of the king's sedan chair (*ana* ^{gis}*ša šadādi ša šarri*). No. 23 also has a pair of recipients: it is later than No. 22, and it looks rather as though Uşur-namkur-šarri has moved on, perhaps to higher office, and his previous associate Adad-šumu-lešir has become the senior partner, with a new colleague, Piradu. The three units of felt they receive for the palace are destined for “covering (*ka-ta-me*) table(s) in the presence of [(the deities)] of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta” (cf. Freydank ad loc.).

Nos. 24-6 are only published in transliteration and some details are accordingly unclear. No. 24, with 532 goatskins and only 110 sheepskins, is reminiscent of No. 20, with skins described as *Zari'utu*, but the latter part of the text is badly damaged. No. 25 probably mentions [*š*]*ingu* wool, an obscure term attested with wool in other Middle Assyrian texts, which has been issued by the steward to a *sāpi'u* called Istar-šuma-ereš for spinning, while No. 26 is sealed by Mušabši-Sebetti, already known to us as a *sāpi'u* in No. 20, and records his receipt of ten talents of “good-quality wool” coming from unshorn sheepskins (KUŠ UDU.MEŠ *ša-ú-ru-te*).

The connections between these documents are self-evident, and because they all bear one of the 13058 numbers²⁷ it seems clear that this group was discovered within the main body of the Stewards' Archive. The title of steward is only mentioned in No. 25 (Nabu-bela-uşur), but in fact we know from other sources that for a while at least Uşur-namkur-šarri held the post,²⁸ and the most economical reconstruction has to be that he is here involved in his function as steward. That raises the question of why he has a second person with him: it is impossible to answer this with confidence, but we may note the duo of the *qēpu* and the scribe in the Durkatlimmu annual account summaries and elsewhere. That in No. 23 there are two recipients, neither of whom is Uşur-namkur-šarri, suggests that there was some administrative reason for involving two persons, whether or not one of them was the steward (unless of course Adad-šumu-lešir did hold that post for a short time after Uşur-namkur-šarri – there was an eponym of this name under Shalmaneser).²⁹ As for Ubru, there is a possibility that this is the Ubru of the major archive from the west side of the city at Aššur, who is now known for at least some of his career to have been a village inspector. In

²⁵ Compare MARV 8.57 where an otherwise unattested steward, Šilli-uraše, receives ten bronze vessels “for the palace” (*a-na Ê.GAL-lim*).

²⁶ 2 PA.MEŠ *ša tahapše*: it appears the felt was handled in a unit written PA(.MEŠ). It is not known to me if these were “poles” (despite the lack of the GİŠ determinative); cf. Jakob 2003, 434–5 translating “rolls” (Rollen). Here it appears a unit of felt weighed 8 minas (~4 kg); in No. 17 the three units weighed 21 minas, that is 7 minas (~3.5 kg) each.

²⁷ Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999a, 80 confirms that Nos. 24–6 belong to Ass. 13058.

²⁸ See p. 149 footnote 6 for his name with the title AGRIG on his seal, and on a tablet from Tell Ali; supervising an issue of gold for Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta with this title: MARV 8.89:17–18. For his other titles see Jakob 2003, 114 (19). He was an eponym (for year 37) and at times he bears the designation “royal eunuch”, is a royal “representative” (*qēpu*), and the governor of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (cf. Fischer 1999, 128–31).

²⁹ However, note that in year 26 Nabu-bela-uşur is attested as steward (No. 3), while texts 21 and 22 in which Uşur-namkur-šarri is involved, come respectively from year 25 and 27. Certainty about his role in the Group II texts is accordingly difficult to achieve.

MARV 5.83-8 he is son of Adad-šuma-iddina, but elsewhere without a filiation it is difficult to know if it is the same person.

Other Texts From the Stewards' Archive (Texts 27-71)

The other published documents from Ass. 13058, although they do not explicitly mention a steward, are consistent with this picture. It is not coincidental that a lower proportion of these texts and those in Group II are sealed than those in Group I: this is because the formulation of bilateral, sealed documents requires that the owner (i.e. the palace) and the responsible official (i.e. the steward) should be specified, whereas this was not necessary in the internal memoranda which constitute the majority of the texts in Groups II and III. While in a few cases the identity of the first party may have been lost in a broken passage, more often the text simply did not specify the ownership of the commodity because this was tacitly taken for granted. Such texts are ipso facto to be seen as unilateral and internal records of the steward's establishment. Because in this context our concern is with the range of commodities attested, Group III is arranged in accordance with the subject matter. It can be seen that most of the list involves materials similar to those in Group I, but there are also a few rather different subjects, including texts concerned with metals used as currency, a document concerning the partial repayment of a house price (reckoned in a currency lost to us) and one or two documents concerned with the administration of people.

The Range of Commodities

The materials recorded by the steward's scribes are varied but from a restricted range. On one hand we meet raw materials coming into the system, and on the other finished artefacts, which may have been processed within the establishment or imported ready made.

The commodities attested in these published texts agree substantially with the range described by Pedersén, who was partly drawing on many unpublished documents.³⁰ What is striking about this list is not so much what is there, as what is not there. With the possible exception of the oxen in No. 36 (which is mainly concerned with skins), there are no live animals.³¹ Except for the honey and butter in No. 27, and possibly some of the sesame oil, these materials are not regular food or drink. The aromatics were partly used as incense (cedar in No. 15), partly in the preparation of perfumed oil (No. 34). Spices presumably went to specialist food preparers, and a range of six spices is explicitly mentioned in Ass. 2001.D-1933 going as a work-assignment to the "flour-processers of the cooks" (¹⁰*a-laḥ-ḥi-ni ša LÚ.MU.MEŠ*).³²

³⁰ Pedersén 1985, 73–5.

³¹ The horses in Ass.2001, D-1501 (Frahm 2002, 68–9) seem to be brought in from Nairi by a merchant: they are effectively trade goods, and logistically destined for the military, rather than the product of Assyrian animal husbandry, and therefore belong in a different context from flocks and herds.

³² Frahm 2002, 72; the same *alahḫinu* receives spices for "the king's meal" (*a-na-ap-ta-an LUGAL*) in Ass.2001.D-2276 (Frahm 2002, 81).

Table 4.6. *Commodities handled**

Raw materials	Processed products	Text Nos.
Plant (product)s		
Straw?		[53]
Sesame		7
	Sesame oil	11; 34
	Perfumed oil	8
Almond		2
Wood		35 [?] ; 36 [?]
Aromatics		15; 32-4
Spices		16
Herbs		28-31
Madder		3; 46; 47
Animal (product)s		
Oxen		36 [?]
Skins of large animals		18
	Leather items [*]	42
Sheep and goat skins		19; 20; 24; 36; 40; 41
Sinews, tendons etc.		12; 20; 37-9
Horn		12 [?]
Glue		12; 39
	Chariots	cf. 37; 38
	Bows	12
	Felt	3 [?] ; 21; 23
	Felt hats	22
Raw wool		26
	Dyed wool	43; 45; 50
	<i>šingu</i> wool	25; 44
Honey		27
	Butter	27
	Textiles, carpets	6; 48-50
	Clothing	51-2
Stone etc.		
Alum		47
	Grindstones	5; 54; 55
	Jewellery	65
Metals		
Copper ingots		59
Bronze		60-62
	Bronze vessels	14
	Bronze tools	13; 17; 58 [?] ; 60
	Arrowheads	9; 10; 56; 57
	Scrap	13
Lead – AN.NA (<i>abāru</i>)		1; 60; 61-2 [?] ; 63
Tin – AN.NA BABBAR		61
Silver		3

* The commodities attested in the new Ass. 21101 texts published in MARV 10 are broadly similar to those already tabulated here, including leather (see next footnote), metals, wool and textiles, grindstones, timber, aromatics and chariots.

* *duḥšiu* leather is now mentioned in at least six texts from Ass. 21101 (F): MARV 10.5; 6; 20; 28; 29; 56.

The point to note is that the steward does not supply such items as food to the consumers himself, but as work materials to specialists; this is also surely the case with the medical herbs listed in Nos. 28–31, some at least of which may have gone to a physician (*asu'u*),³³ although in Nos. 28 and 29, the latest tablets we have, the recipient is an exorcist.³⁴

A good proportion of the products handled are either the raw materials for manufacturing goods such as textiles and weapons – often wool and metals, but also wood and leather – or the manufactured items themselves; chariots and bows, both requiring multiple components and skilled craftsmen, are mentioned, but only as the end product. Again, the steward's role is that of an intermediary channelling the raw materials to those processing them and retaining control of the manufactured item. From the published texts we get no sense that the steward was primarily involved with the administration of personnel or organising either military or agricultural activities. It is true that one additional type of text listed by Pedersén (1985, 74) is the tabular list, usually involving persons. This is not unduly surprising; they very likely remain unpublished because they are not especially illuminating, but until they are published it will not be possible to work out whether the persons are listed in relation to the steward's management of material commodities, or they themselves represent a commodity. Without this extra evidence relating to personnel, it is difficult to be certain that the stewards were also directly concerned with agricultural domains and associated labour, as suggested by Jakob (2003, 100), areas which may rather have fallen under the (provincial) governors.³⁵

The Steward, the Palace and the King

Unlike the stewards of elite households, who are referred to as “the steward of the House of X”, the holders of this state office are simply designated “Steward” (AGRIG) for most of the 13th and 12th centuries, although as already noted, the title AGRIG GAL comes in with Apliya, who was active during the reign of Tiglath-pileser. One might have expected that they would be referred to as the “palace steward”, but this combination is not attested. Nevertheless, it appears from many of the transactions that they did indeed act as the palace's steward.

Institutionally this is clear. As well as the recurrent statement that goods are “of the palace” (*ša ēkalli*), in No. 9, the contributors “brought” (*ittablūni*) the arrowheads “to the palace” and they were received by the steward, sounding as though he was actually in the palace. Similarly in Nos. 20–3 the felt is received “for the palace”. Ass. 2001.D-2279 from the 2001 excavations records bows and arrows “which Ibašši-ilu, son of Ili-pada returned³ to the palace” (*a-na É. GAL-lim ú-ta-e-ra-an-ni*; Frahm 2002, 83). Whether the steward's activities were physically housed in the palace proper is another question. Architecturally the building(s) from which our archives appear to derive can hardly be considered part of the palace, but it was perhaps

³³ See Jakob 2003, 535–7 for the *asu'u*; add now Sin-mušabši (MARV 4.107:24; and probably the same man in MARV 8.1:20).

³⁴ LÜ.MAŠ.MAŠ = *āšipu*; for an earlier exorcist receiving oil via the steward cf. No. 11 rev. 4'.

³⁵ It is difficult to be sure if the activities of Nabu-bela-ušur involving people (cf. Jakob 2003, 105–6) are to do with his function as a steward or rather in some other capacity at a different stage of his career.

as near as practically convenient.³⁶ The Middle Assyrian royal palace in the time of Adad-nirari I and Shalmaneser I stood immediately west of the Aššur Temple ziqqurrat. The area from which the Stewards' Archive was retrieved was separated from the south-west corner of that palace by the Sin-Šamaš Temple, a distance of about 100 metres. Tukulti-Ninurta I built a new larger palace in the north-west corner of the city, to the west of the Anu-Adad Temple: its south-east corner was also approximately 100 metres away from the area of the archive but on the far side of the Ištar Temple.³⁷ It can hardly therefore have been physically linked to either of the two palaces. We have no real indication of the size of the steward's establishment, because the architectural remains which could be planned are scrappy and hard to interpret, and there is no telling how far the building complex might have extended to the south and east. Equally, we have no clue as to what the establishment itself might have been called: we never encounter references to "the House of the Steward", and it seems doubtful that the "House of Samnuḫa-ašared"³⁸ refers to the steward's house, because it appears that each successive steward occupied the same establishment.

The tablets found in 1908 were distributed through a layer of fill which lay over the paved courtyard to a depth of twenty to forty centimetres. An unusual range of artefacts was discovered by the German excavators on the paving of the courtyard above which the tablets were scattered. They included incised ivory and lead plaques, glass beads and other ornaments, a glazed vessel with inscription, a mace head and vessels in frit, a variety of copper, bronze and lead items including arrow heads, sea shells and coral and a quantity of red earth.³⁹ As Peder-sén points out, this may well reflect the physical presence of these materials in the establishment where the documents were kept. Miglus comments that the wide open spaces and the row of small rooms along the west side of the courtyard are unsuitable for normal residential use but well suited to the storage of goods and lively traffic (1996, 149). Not enough is known about the building to tell us whether craftsmen were actually employed on the premises, but this seems slightly improbable so close to the elite area of the city. Moreover there are no reported craftsman's tools or installations which would suggest that manufacturing processes were carried out here, and it seems more likely that the items came from a storage facility, which would occupy less space but also fall under the direct supervision of the household.

That the steward's office was not merely an agency of the state but closely linked to the palace in the sense of the king's residence and household emerges from some of the details in the documents. Royal authority is sometimes cited as the reason for a transaction: in No. 6 the king personally instructed that the clothing of Ištar of Arbail should go to the steward, and the 2000 arrowheads in No. 10 and at least one of the allocations of oil listed in No. 11 were issued "at the king's command" (*ina abat šarri*). At least some of the libations of oil listed in

³⁶ For its location near the palace(s) cf. Miglus 1996, 149.

³⁷ See Miglus 2004, 248–9 with bibliography. It is of course probable that the Old Palace remained in use, and it is occasionally referred to as such ("writing-board of the Old Palace", MARV 4.138:33; 140:22'; 7.99:16'; cf. also Frahm 2002, 69 alongside the "New Palace in the Central City").

³⁸ MARV 5.41:3; the tablet belongs to one of the Aššur Temple archives (Ass. 18771) and this must be our steward's later namesake.

³⁹ For a detailed list, with reference to the publication of a few of these items see now Miglus 1996, 150–1.

No. 8 sound very much as though they were carried out, if not by the king in person, then at least on his behalf. No. 65 records King Ninurta-apil-Ekur's personal gift of jewellery to his daughter Muballīṭat-Šerua, suggesting that the steward controlled even high-value items belonging to the royal household. He also supplied some of the royal family's own requirements. The textile in No. 3 was destined for the royal throne, the felt in No. 21 for the king's sedan chair (*ana^{giš}ša šadādi ša šarri*), and materials in No. 39 are issued for an item (probably a chariot) "which the king had ordered to be repeatedly decorated², to be decorated² for a second time".⁴⁰ Whether the statue of the king for which a coloured cloak was intended in No. 52:6 was in the palace or a temple we cannot tell. Nos. 28 and 29 list herbs issued to the exorcist "for a salve for" (*ana napšalti*) the king's son and daughter respectively. The newly excavated tablets seem to include a high proportion of references to the king and his household. Spices issued to the "*alahḫinu* of the cooks" were on one occasion designated as "for the king's meal" (see footnote 38), while in year 28 (reign of Tukulti-Ninurta) a butler received a vat (*kuninnu*) "for pouring beer for the king" (Frahm 2002, 82 D-2277).

Alongside their engagement in the palace's commercial ventures, the stewards also handled items relating to the king's military exploits and international activities. There seems to be little direct interaction with the army, but some texts are concerned with the manufacture of military equipment, principally bows and chariots, and the steward may have been particularly involved with supplying the king himself with weaponry. Thus he dealt with arrows and bows described as "of the king's hand".⁴¹ No. 51 records garments and headgear issued to a "Hittite interpreter as a present",⁴² while No. 60 deals with lead and bronze handed out to the people of Mušri on the occasion of the king's visit to Arazīqi. No. 14 is concerned with bronze cauldrons awarded for some diplomatic achievement in relation to the people of Ḫabḫi on Assyria's northern frontier, and a text notified by Frahm (2002, 82-3 D-2279) lists bows and arrows sent by another northern neighbour, the king of Šubria. In another list of predominantly military equipment we find items "which Melišipak, King of Karduniaš sent [to Ninurta-apil-]Ekur, King of Assyria" (Frahm 2002, 75 D-2217).

It appears that the steward also operated away from his base, outside the city of Aššur, as of course did the kings themselves. We find that Ušur-namkur-šarri while steward was able to order the issue of wool from the flock-masters of Atmannu (Tell Ali) for the clothing of troops from Nairi (Ismail & Postgate 2008, No. 24), and at Nineveh Šamaš-aḫa-iddina is concerned with spices for the table of Ninurta-apil-Ekur (Ass. 2001.D-2276, Frahm 2002, 81-2). We know that even in the provinces government property was designated as "of the palace" (*ša ēkalli*), but there the commodities are under the general control of the provincial governor. Therefore when the Aššur steward is encountered outside the city, it may be that this is in connection with a temporary transposition of the royal household to a different part of the kingdom, rather than an intrusion of the steward on the governor's routine administration within his province. Rather different is the scenario during the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta,

⁴⁰ *ša LUGAL a-na [...] a-na i-ta-du-e iq-bi-ú-ni, ša-nu-te-šu a-na na-da-a-e ta-ad-nu* (cf. CAD N/i, 86-7).

⁴¹ For arrows (*šiltāḫu*) "of the king's hand" cf. MARV 1.10:2, 16; bows: Frahm 2002, 75-7 D-2218.

⁴² See Freydank 1994b.

when we find Ušur-namkur-šarri acting as steward at the newly constructed capital of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta: obviously the king's new palace there required a steward, but we cannot tell if the Aššur steward's remit was simply extended to cover the new capital, or a new post was created. In either case, it is obvious that the Aššur steward remained responsible for the logistics of the old and the new palace at Aššur itself, given that our archive continues through the 12th century into the reign of Tiglath-pileser.⁴³

Commodity Transactions

Taken together, the ensemble of documents allows us to describe the role of the steward's office as the procurement, manufacture and processing, and provision of commodities to the royal palace, whether as raw materials or finished products. To get a clearer idea of what this involved, we may try tracking the movement of commodities through the organisation. The initial stage, of procurement or acquisition, is poorly attested. This may in part be because if a bilateral document was made out to record this event the person or agency which delivered it would have taken the tablet as evidence of the delivery. The steward's organisation would not have needed a copy, although it is true we might expect the receipt to have been recorded in some other way. An example may be text No. 9, which records the steward's receipt of arrowheads as part of *ilku* obligations, and this, as an unsealed tablet, is probably intended for internal use. Text No. 8, on the other hand, where the steward is recorded as in receipt of multiple oil disbursements, is probably a component of a continuing relationship with the perfumers, with the oil originally issued to them by the steward.

Storage is also sparsely attested, although the steward's establishment must have maintained at least temporary stocks of both raw materials and manufactured goods. If records of the contents of storerooms were kept they have not reached us, but MARV 8.67, whose Ass. number is lost, is a sealed work contract involving more than a talent of alum, and mentions a "palace storeroom" (JÉ *na-kám-te ša É.GAL-lim*), unfortunately in a broken context.⁴⁴ On the other hand, there are plenty of memoranda referring to the issue of commodities, often recording the provision of materials to a craftsman or other specialist. The standard format for such a memorandum gives the commodity first, names the recipient and then states that the commodity "has been issued (to him)" using the stative (*ana* PN *tadin/tadnat*, or *tadnaššu*), which means that the identity of the person or institution making the issue is not given.⁴⁵ There are plenty of variations and extensions of this basic model:

Rationale for issue: Occasionally the scribe found it necessary to explain the reason for the transaction. Thus if the recipient will have no further liability, the explanation is sometimes that it was provided to him or her as a gift. The Hittite interpreter receives his clothing "as a

⁴³ See, p. 29 footnote 80 for texts from MARV 10 ending with the statement PN *qēpu*, some of which might result from the appointment of other officials to act in place of the steward in remote locations.

⁴⁴ Cf. also *iš-tu na-kám-te* in a broken context in No. 58:28' (Faist 2001, 174), which suggests (unsurprisingly) that some of the palace's metal for trading purposes may have been kept in store.

⁴⁵ *tadin*: No. 11:rev.12'; No. 14:17; No. 17:14; No. 55:6; *tadnū*: No. 53:9; *tadnā*: No. 10; No. 57; *tadnaššu* Nos. 3; 4; 48; 50; *tadnaššunu* No. 64; *ša ... tadnāni* No. 5.

gift" (*kī rīmutte*, No. 51:13), evidently a reward for doing his job. Even a gift from the king to his daughter is logged (No. 65). As noted earlier, some transactions are "at the command of the king" (*ina abat šarri*, e.g. No. 10). Here, as in other cases, the justification for the issue was contained in a written request "in accordance with the directive (*ana pī našperte*) of PN" (also in No. 14). In a few cases the memorandum even includes a brief case history of the circumstances. In No. 14, we learn that the bronze vessels are being issued to a Habḥaeen in recognition of his role in Assyria's relations with his homeland. There is also the tale of the gardener in No. 17 and the rather rambling account in No. 60, where the origin of separate amounts of lead and bronze issued to the Mušraeans is cited: "the bronze (taken) from [x] talents of bronze which were in the charge of the merchant who brought it from Nineveh, (and) the lead (taken) from 1 talent of lead which the Babylonian merchant exported from the land of Ḫatti, (and) they were cast at Aššur into 50 hatchets each (weighing) half a mina – issued to the Mušraeans on the day the king went to Araziqu to take control of(?) the land of Muš[ri]". In No. 8 there is a series of events described to account for separate issues of oil. These mini-histories seem to be there partly to provide the justification or rationale for the transaction, and partly to identify the source of the commodity, perhaps for accounting purposes: in both Nos. 14 and 60 the bronze issued is sourced from a larger assemblage of metals to which it had belonged. Similarly sesame in No. 7 comes from a larger quantity (*ša lib-bi ŠE.IĀ.GIŠ*).

Statement of purpose: In other instances the purpose of the issue will be stated: so for instance madder "to dye (the cloth)" (1 *ma-ri-ni ... ana šarāpi tadnaššu* No. 3), "to pour beer for the king" (LUGAL KAŠ *ana šaqāē*, Ass. 2001.D-2277, Frahm 2002, 82), cedar "for burning for sacrifices" (*ana UDU.SISKUR.MEŠ ana šarāpi*, No. 15); "for the black wool to soak it" (*ana SĪG.ZA.GĪN.G[I₆] ana šabbu'e tadnaššu*, Ass. 2001.D-2219, Frahm 2002, 80), "to open up wells" ([PŪ.ME]Š *ana ḥappu'e tādunīšu*, Ass. 2001.D-1322, Frahm 2002, 64); "for moulding bricks" (SIG₄.MEŠ *ša Bēlat-nipḫi ana šaḥāṭi*, No. 53:11'–14'); arrowheads "for binding (onto shafts)" (*ana kašāri*, No. 56:9); "for manufacturing" *ana epāše an[a ... t]adin* No. 14:16-17.

Some memoranda concern the issue of materials for work-assignments (*iškāru*): No. 37 records the issue of glue and tendons to "Ḫinibu and the chariot-carpenters who are with him" for the work-assignment of four sedan chairs (*ana GIŠ.GĀR ša 4^{giš}ša ša-da-a-di*), and sinews go for the work-assignment of three chariots in No. 38. Aromatics and oil are issued in No. 34 "for the work-assignment of the eponymate of Mušezib-[Aššur]". Slightly different are two unsealed memoranda, where grindstones are issued as the tools necessary to food processors for carrying out their assigned work, which was no doubt the grinding of grain (*ana iškārišunu ... tādā* No. 55:42; *ana iškārišunu ... maḥrū* No. 54:20-2).

Statement of obligation: Similarly, but more explicitly, a text may specify what the recipient is expected to do, and in these cases the text is often a sealed bilateral document, usually with the *tuppušu iḥappi* clause. The obligation can be expressed by a second subsidiary clause using a verb such as *epāšu*: for example "they will make and deliver (it), (and then) may break their tablet" (*eppušū iddunū tuppušunu iḥappi'ū*, No. 67:29'–30', where the nature of the commodity to be processed is regrettably lost). In No. 53, the craftsman has received

materials (lost in the break but presumably straw) for making bricks: when he has moulded the bricks he will deliver them, and may break his tablet. Such documents, in which the recipient is required to convert the commodity into a processed artefact and return it, may be categorised as *work and delivery contracts*. Here too one particular class of such contracts is for a prescribed work-assignment (*iškāru*), for example No. 12, where large amounts of glue and sinews are issued to eight bowyers *ana iškārišunu* (see p. 160). Likewise in No. 4 the threshing-sledge carpenter (*ša namšarāte*) is issued 30 minas of *kantappu* (whatever that is! – hardly flint) “for his work-assignment for the eponymate of Ḫaburraru”. In one of the newly excavated tablets a consignment of six spices and some conifer twigs is issued by UDpu the steward to a certain Erib-Šamaš, the *alahhinu* of the cooks (LÚ.MU.MEŠ) “for his work-assignment of the eponymate of Erib-[Sin] the Chief Cook” (Frahm 2002, 72: Ass. 2001.D-1933). Although neither of these has the *tuppušu ihappi* clause, they are both sealed. This may reflect the fact that the recipient was in due course expected to account for his use of the commodity, but it is also perhaps another instance where the use of the *iškāru* system may account for the greater formality (cf. p. 138).

Of course, in some cases the recipient's duties are to process or distribute the commodity in such a way that it cannot be returned. A prime example is No. 15, where Babu-šuma-ereš has nothing to return to the steward because his allocation of cedar has literally gone up in smoke. In this case, his obligation is fulfilled by presenting accounts.⁴⁶ Presumably he was expected to maintain a record of how much cedar was burnt each day. The text quite explicitly says “*they* shall draw up his accounts”, but we do not learn who other than he was involved. For an idea of how these accounts might have looked see No. 19, which gives the “drawn up accounts (*nikkassū šabtūtu*) of Amurru-šuma-ušur, the Chief Felt-maker” for a period of two full years. The tablet is ruled into a five-column table on the obverse, and like other such accounts, this tablet is not sealed, nor is it witnessed. The right-hand column gives the month, and columns I to IV have a heading specifying the kind of animal skin – from “male sheep” (I), “meadow-fed male sheep” (UDU.NÍTA.MEŠ *pár-ga-ni-ú-tu*; II), “lambs” (UDU.NIM.MEŠ; III) and “male goats” (MÁŠ.MEŠ; IV). Numerical entries are placed in the appropriate boxes: by far the majority are plain “sheepskins” in Column I, which are listed in every month, and many of the other boxes are empty. There is then a subtotal for the full 12 months of the eponymate of Usat-Marduk, and the table continues with the same columns for a further 12 months and a subtotal for the eponymate of Enlil-ašared. The grand total then gives us: Col. I: 4949 – Col. II 128 – Col. III 35 – Col. IV 89 “sheepskins”, and the text continues “for 2 years, in accordance with the writing-boards of sacrifices of the animal-fattener, which he periodically received”. This account therefore seems to set out the number of skins for which Amurru-šuma-ušur should be held responsible, but does not provide corresponding information about the outgoings, so that on its own it could hardly have functioned as evidence that he had fulfilled his obligations. It is worth noting that this two-yearly account has been assembled from the writing-board (list)s of sacrifices kept by another office, in this case the

⁴⁶ Compare Bi 7 and 8 from Tell Billa (Finkelstein 1953) and TR 2045:12'-14', where a royal eunuch “shall draw up his accounts and they may break their tablets” (N)ÍG.KA₉.MEŠ-*šu i-ša-bat ú* DUB.MEŠ-*šu-nu i-ḫap-pi-ú*).

sheep fattener's (*ša kurultiè*), reminding us that because of the perishability of wood we must expect that not only individual documents but perhaps whole stages in the administrative documentation are lost to us.

Another profession which received materials from the palace but was not in a position to deliver them back at a later date was the travelling merchant. The steward's role in the palace's trading enterprises is apparent from text No. 1, from the first half of Shalmaneser's reign. The goods issued to the three traders (*šamallā'ū*) by the steward on behalf of the palace include 10 talents of lead and 4 or more "*iškāru* coats" (TÚG.GÚ.È.MEŠ *ša* GIŠ.GÀR), whose combined value is given as 20 talents of lead. To fulfil their obligation they are required to "draw up their accounts" (*nikkassē-šunu išabbutū*) and they may then break their tablet. The unique section of the text immediately preceding this is too damaged to be restored with confidence, but the little that is clear underlines the point that as merchants acting on behalf of the palace they are expected to return with more than they set out with. If we wonder what their "drawn up accounts" may have looked like, part of the answer may well be provided by texts Nos. 61-3. The nature of text No. 61 is best conveyed by a couple of excerpts:⁴⁷

2 GÚ.UN 31 MA.NA 3 GÍN AN.NA BABBAR 37 GÚ.UN 45¹ MA.NA 15 [GÍN]
AN.NA *a-ba-ru* ŠĀM-*šu* 15.TA.ĀM *a-na* AN.NA *sa-a-s[u-ú]*
a-na ŠĀM 10 ANŠE.KUR.RA.MEŠ NÍTA.MEŠ MU.3 SIG₅.MEŠ

"2 talents 31 minas 3 shekels (=151.05 minas) tin, its value (being) 37 talents 45 minas 15 shekels (=2265.25 minas) lead, declared at a rate to lead of 15 (to 1), for the price of 10 good-quality 3-year-old male horses."

3 GÚ.UN 8⁵/₆ MA.NA 5 GÍN ZABAR 37 GÚ.UN 47 MA.NA

AN.NA *a-ba-ru* ŠĀM-*šu-nu* 12.TA.ĀM *a-n[a* AN].NA *sa-a-su-ú*
a-na ŠĀM 10 ANŠE.EME₅.MEŠ *ša* ANŠE.KUR.RA.[MEŠ] MU.3 SIG₅.MEŠ
50 MA.NA AN.NA BABBAR 12 GÚ.UN 30 MA.NA AN.NA ŠĀM-*šu* 50 MA.NA ZABAR [
10 GÚ.UN AN.NA *a-ba-ru* ŠĀM-*šu-nu* *a-na* ŠĀM 5 LÚ.MEŠ *ši-i-m[e]*

"3 talents 8⁵/₆ minas 5 shekels (=188 + 11/12 minas) bronze, its value (being) 37 talents 47 minas (=2267 minas) lead, declared at a rate to lead of 12 (to 1), for the price of 10 good-quality 3-year-old mares.
50 minas of tin, its value (being) 12 talents 30 minas (=750 minas) lead, 50 minas bronze, its value (being) 10 talents (=600 minas) lead, for the price of 5 purchased men."

The scribe gives the amount and type of metal advanced, followed by its value in lead and the exchange rate used to calculate this – lead:tin @ 15:1 and lead:bronze @ 12:1 – and the items to be purchased. The maths is almost exact ($188 + 11/12 \times 12 = 2267$, and $151 + 1/20 \times 15 = 2265.75$), and this text, along with the very fragmentary pieces Nos. 62 and 63, confirms the deduction from No. 1 that lead was used as a measure of value, like silver in the Ur III accounting system, so that the merchants' financial relationship to the palace could be expressed as a single sum, whether positive or negative.⁴⁸ In the case of No. 61, the text appears to record the capital amounts advanced to the merchants, specifying the goods for

⁴⁷ On this text see Freydank 1982a and Faist 2001, 173–6.

⁴⁸ Cf. Faist 2001, 176; for another text listing quantities of lead and tin with conversions between the two see Frahm 2002, 66–7 D-1500+1515.

which they are intended, and thus to precede the expedition. Text Nos. 62 and 63 are too broken for certainty, but the past tense of the verbs *ú-še-bi-la-an-ni* and *ú-še-bi-lu* in No. 63 (rev. 10", 15') may signal that this is an account drawn up subsequently, in justification of their use of the capital sums advanced, as envisaged in text No. 1.

Taken on their own these documents give a glimpse of the nature of the palace's trading enterprises. Provided with capital in the form of metals and textiles, the traders are to acquire horses (male and female), slaves, ox hides (all in No. 61), dyed wool (No. 62), and perhaps also donkeys (No. 63). Their trade links are with Babylon ("Kassites" in No. 62), Sidon (in No. 63) and a number of more obscure places along the northern frontier (in No. 61). Horses came from the Nairi lands to the north (Frahm 2002, 68-9 D-1501). Other texts from the Stewards' Archive mention merchants bringing bronze to Aššur from Nineveh and Babylonian merchants bringing lead (AN.NA) from the land of Ḫatti (No. 60). North-western links are underlined by No. 59, which reports on losses of copper ingots: "Total 88 ingots (*šabartu*) of copper which were appropriated (*pegutūni*) in the land of Ḫatti", 8 of them in the city of Emar and the remaining 80 in the otherwise unknown town of Ḫazaziri.⁴⁹ These documents concerned with trade are fully discussed and placed in the wider context of international trade in Faist (2001). The treatment of merchants from other countries is a frequent theme of international treaties and correspondence at this time, and some at least of them were clearly commissioned by the palace itself, but we know from the Archive of Babu-aḫa-iddina that outside the palace the elite Aššur households were engaged, as traditionally, in foreign trade and may well have used the same merchants.⁵⁰

Documentary Practice in the Stewards' Archive

As well as carrying out its function of acquisition and provision, the steward's organisation was, as the tablets themselves testify, expected to keep a record of its transactions and so to be able to account for the commodities which passed in or out. Drawing on the details in the preceding section, we can see that there are three main types of document represented here: memoranda, work contracts and accounts.

Memoranda: The majority are "memoranda", in which a transaction is simply recorded unilaterally as a record for the organisation's internal purposes. These will typically not refer to the ownership of the commodity, because it was self-evident, and they will not usually be sealed or include any information about the future disposition of the commodity. On the other hand they may well include details of the *raison d'être* of the transaction or of its authorisation, sometimes amounting to a "mini-history". Many of these tablets are short and refer to a single transaction, but in some instances more than one apparently unrelated transaction can be found on a single tablet (e.g. No. 14), confirming that these memoranda are intended for the internal records of the organisation (and not for the other parties involved in the different

⁴⁹ I am uncertain why Monroe (2009, 66) assigns this tablet to the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive. His transliteration of *pegutūni* as *wa-qū-tu-ú-ni* is improbable in Middle Assyrian and the translation "are kept" is unsustainable (see CAD P 473a s.v. *puāgu* for this passage).

⁵⁰ For trading commissions at Nuzi, see pp. 355–8.

transactions). Nevertheless, in a few cases an otherwise typical unilateral document, once or twice even bearing the remark “written down so as not to forget”, does bear a seal impression, indicating that the other party was accepting its content and the implied liability.⁵¹

The majority of such memoranda use stative forms of the verb, as already observed both here and in the Offerings Archive, but the newly published texts from the Stewards' Archive in MARV 10 include a number of texts recording deliveries with the perfect form *ittabla* “he has brought” (with *ittablaššu* and *ittablūni*). This formulation was known occasionally elsewhere but is especially frequent in this part of the Stewards' Archive, and these texts, at least seven of which specify that the goods were brought “into the palace”, confirm the assumption that the steward's operation was simply an arm of the palace.⁵²

Work contracts: Less frequent are the bilateral tablets referred to earlier as work contracts. These are typically sealed, and give the identity of the owner (i.e. the palace) and the official in charge (i.e. the steward), followed by the name of the person accepting the liability. They are forward looking and so often specify what is to happen to the commodity. Depending on its nature the debtor will be required either to process the raw material and deliver a finished product (work and delivery contract), or to use the materials issued and give an account of how they were disposed of (work and accounting contract). In many cases, but not always, the text then states that they may “break their tablet”. In some cases the work in question (and the materials) are specified as “a work-assignment” (*iškāru*), or the commodity is issued “for their work-assignment”, but unless this is explicitly stated we are not entitled to assume, as is sometimes done, that all such transactions fall under an *iškāru* arrangement.

These texts are unquestionably more formalised, and in my view they would have been known as a *tuppu šabittu*. As already noted, they are sealed by the debtor, his filiation is not infrequently given and they are regularly dated (whereas not all memoranda have their date). On the other hand, they are not by any means as formal as contracts from the private sector: those would also be witnessed, with the witnesses' seals on the reverse and sides of the tablet, often identified by a Siegelvermerk or caption, and fathers' names are invariably given, sometimes even grandfathers'. Moreover, when repayment is required in the private sector a date would normally be prescribed (with penalties for late payment), whereas within the Stewards' Archive at least a delivery date is never specified.

Accounts: We know that accounts were maintained for the stewards by some of the parties with whom they conducted their business – in particular merchants and the official responsible for incense burning – because this was required in their contracts. Actual account tablets grouping a series of transactions over a given time period are attested for the Chief Felt-maker and the Perfumers. We do not seem to have any accounts covering a period of time kept by the stewards, but it is clear from No. 11 “They shall deduct (this amount) from their formally executed tablet which is incumbent on them”, or the clause “they shall deduct (it) from the formally executed tablet (*ina tuppi šabitte*) of the palace which is incumbent on

⁵¹ There are at least four instances of a sealed document with this phrase: MARV 1.10, which despite its Ass. number should belong to the Stewards' Archive (see Pedersén 1985, 81), MARV 3.34 from the Offerings Archive, and in Mutta's Archive texts Nos. 51 and 52, both probably with his seal.

⁵² MARV 10.18:9; 10.26:6; 10.31:5; 10.76:10; 10.77:13; 10.81:10; 10.82:6.

Šamaš-qarrad" in the context of a leather worker's work-assignment (Frahm 2002, 71, D-1618), that the stewards did maintain an ongoing written record of their transactions with some of their regular partners.

One of the recently excavated documents seems to be an internal record setting out the liabilities of a succession of individuals (Frahm 2002, 75-8, D-2218: bow(-component)s incumbent on (*ša* UGU) PN). The incompleteness of the text prevents us from knowing the precise nature of these obligations, but it must have been drawn up to assist the stewards in keeping track of what was due to be received and suggests that there was more monitoring of the overall enterprise than is attested in the documentation we currently see. It is hard to imagine that the stewards kept comprehensive accounts for every commodity movement in and out of the organisation, but if they did not, what was the purpose of the memoranda? Possibly they fed into separate divisional accounts for different members of the organisation, such as the textiles or the metals. These would not have been compiled by the specialists themselves (e.g. weavers or smiths), but we have no hint in our texts of the scribal or administrative staff who must surely have operated under the formal authority of the steward.

Summary

To sum up, the scattered remains of the stewards' records yield a clear picture of an organisation devoted to supplying the king and his palace staff with a range of commodities, to tracking their manufacture and authorising and at least sometimes recording their consumption. This agrees with the role played by stewards (AGRIG) in private households (including those mentioned in the Archive of Mutta, to be discussed next, and at Ili-pada's farmstead at Sabi Abyad), and the operation seems to be driven by the specific requirements of the royal household (in its widest sense), rather than being some generalised state agency administering government income and expenditure. There is no explicit mention of taxation,⁵³ and the texts notably do not seem to deal with large volumes of food or drink or with the administration of personnel. As in other archives known to us, documents are used to regulate the use of raw materials by craftsmen and others charged with manufacturing or processing them, and these, although sealed, are not drawn up with the same level of formality as would be used in the private sector. There is little sign that the steward's house kept comprehensive accounts of the commodities it handled, although in some cases its "business partners" were expected to keep and present accounts. Moreover there is no mention of parallel government agencies with which the steward's house might have interacted; although arrows, bows and chariots feature in the list of goods handled by the stewards, we do not come across any transactions in which the military is directly involved. As elsewhere, the scribes who wrote the tablets remain elusive, although it is likely enough that they are mentioned by name without their professions, as is normal both at Aššur and at Nuzi, where patronymics and professional or ethnic specifications are otiose within a single organisation.

⁵³ There is no mention in the Stewards' Archive of revenue from the customs office (*miksu*), although this need not be decisive because the texts say very little about the source of commodities.

4.3 | The Archive of Mutta the Animal-Fattener

While the function of the Chief Steward emerges most clearly from the archive just described, a different light is cast on the role of stewards in households outside the palace by some of the documents in the Archive of Mutta. This consists of about 100 tablets found together in a jar just west of the Old Palace, and as already shown by the exemplary study of E. F. Weidner, the first proper study of a single Middle Assyrian archive, Mutta must have been attached to the palace when Ninurta-tukul-Aššur was the regent, and the tablets in the jar come from the span of just 12 months. They are virtually all concerned with sheep and goats and with occasional cattle, which were delivered to the palace and into the charge of Mutta, whose prime function seems to have been as the “animal fattener” (ša kurultīe), although he is also referred to as an “usher” (zāriqu) and a “eunuch” (ša rēšēn).

The animals coming in are mostly described as “audience gifts” and are brought, often from outside the city, by a range of provincial governors, local mayors, stewards of elite households and other officials and private persons for whom this was evidently part of the accepted procedures for securing an audience with the ruler (though we have no reason to think they were the only commodity serving as audience gifts). The location of the archive agrees perfectly with the role we can assign to Mutta, which will have been to take charge of the animals as they arrived in the palace (although we cannot be sure whether they were allowed into the audience chamber itself), and make arrangements for them to be fed and watered while their ultimate destination was determined. Hence we find that many of them are entrusted to a “gardener”, who probably had an orchard in which they could graze, or occasionally to the city gatekeepers, while others go to the brewers and flour processers to be fattened up on the waste products generated by their grinding and brewing activities.

The final destination may not have been long in coming, though. Some of the sheep were served at the royal table, but many more went to the lions and their cubs kept by the palace. Occasionally sheep were presented to subjects, in particular metalworkers, who had earned the gratitude of the ruler, and both sheep and goats were issued to the exorcists to whom the palace turned to preserve the purity and health of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur’s family, or perhaps we should say, harem.

All this we know because of the notes kept in Mutta’s office. By comparison with our first two archives, his documentation was relatively informal and almost entirely composed of unilateral memoranda. We can see that the transactions recorded fall neatly into three stages – arrival, interim allocation and final disposition, and logically the documentation could have been correspondingly organised, with a memorandum of receipt for the first stage, and issues or receipts for the second and third. In fact, the different stages are often combined on a single tablet, and there is little consistency of formulation or phraseology. Just one text attempts

to draw up a statement of account, which provides an explanation for why the tablets were written and conserved, and was presumably required of Mutta by whoever oversaw his activities.

The Archive and Its Provenance

An assemblage of 112 tablets was found with the broken sherds of a large jar in which it had evidently been stored, and was numbered Ass. 6096. This jar was in squares eE5IV and eE5III, at a depth of 3 metres in fill very close to the east side of the brick foundation platform of the Anu-Adad Temple, at a spot about 3.5 metres north of the gateway between the temple and the Old Palace.¹ The tablets belong closely together as a single archive, as is obvious from their contents, but a few other tablets which belong to the same archive were also found in the vicinity (Pedersén 1985, I, 52). A jarful of tablets like this must presumably have been housed in a building of some kind, and it seems clear from the content of the texts that this was associated in some way with the royal palace directly to its east, rather than the Anu-Adad Temple. No structure was reported in the vicinity of the archive by the excavators, but the jar was found in fill (*alte Schutt*) well below the level of the Tiglath-pileser I gateway, and so it is possible that it had been associated with a building removed by the extension of the Anu-Adad Temple's platform which cut through this layer.

This archive has received more attention than most, perhaps partly because, as promised by its discovery together as a single batch, its contents have a dramatic unity allowing their data to be exploited with more confidence than is usually the case. A fundamental study of the archive was given in 1935 by Weidner, who was able to use virtually all the texts of the archive by combining the Berlin tablets published by Ebeling with the excavators' photographs of the remaining half of the archive, which was in the Museum of the Ancient Orient at Istanbul.² Subsequently Donbaz copied and edited the Istanbul texts, providing important additions and corrections,³ and an updated survey of the contents of the archive was offered in Pedersén 1985, I, 56-68. This chapter, which uses the numbering of the texts introduced by Weidner, owes much to their work.

With just one exception, the tablets of this archive are concerned with the movement of sheep, oxen and occasional goats through the administrative hands of an official called

¹ See Andrae 1909, Taf. III and Taf. VII (section U-V) for the precise location of Ass. 6096.

² Ebeling 1933, 26-53 edited forty-eight texts, the great majority previously published by him in copy in KAJ; these were assigned numbers 1-48 by Weidner; copies of Nos. 14, 24 and 43, which were not in KAJ, are given by Weidner p. 31. One further Berlin text (VAT 9375) was published in Schroeder 1925, 262-3 (No. 49, copy also in Weidner 1935-6, 31), and another by Weidner as No. 50 (copy p. 32). The Istanbul tablets 51-111 were edited in Weidner 1935-6, 33-44; these were copied and re-edited in Donbaz 1976, frequently adding parts of the text which had not been visible to Weidner on the excavation photos. For convenience I have added to the end of Weidner's sequence three further tablets published by Donbaz, two with no precise provenance (Pedersén 1985, 68, Group C): A.1041 (Pl. 3, pp. 16-17; No. 112) and A.2622 (Pl. 16, pp. 32-3; No. 113), and one from a secondary Neo-Assyrian context in the same area of the site (Pedersén Group D): A.1812 (Pl. 10, p. 25 = Ass. 12758 edited by Weidner on p. 30; No. 114). The contents of Ass. 6109a and 6109b (Pedersén's Group B) remain unknown.

³ Donbaz 1976. Subsequently he also collated many of the Berlin tablets (Donbaz 1980).

Mutta, whose precise function is discussed shortly. The great majority of them record one or more stages in the passage of these animals through the system over the course of a single year. These stages are: arrival, interim allocation to an official and final disposition, and they are discussed in that order.⁴ Despite the restricted range of the documents they are surprisingly informative on a variety of subjects – on the king, his court and his harem, the host of officials, the extent of the realm and the capital at Assur, on deities, temples, cult and ritual, and finally on the types of domestic animals (to paraphrase Weidner 1935-6, 9).

The Arrivals

The animals coming into the administrative remit of Mutta are summarised for us in the sealed account text No. 95 cited here, covering just over half a year.

(Seal impression)

4 ME UDU.MEŠ *ša* KUR *i-sa-ni*
 1 ME *ša* ^{ur}*ku-liš-ḫi-na-áš*
3 ME *ša* ¹*ta-ḫi-li*
 ŠU.NÍGIN 8 ME UDU.MEŠ *ša pa-ḫa-te*^{mes}
 9 ME 14 UDU.MEŠ
na-mu-ra-tu ša ^{1.d}MAŠ-GIŠ.KU-*aš-šur*
 PAB-*ma* 1 *lim* 7 ME ¹14¹ UDU.MEŠ
ša iš-tu ITI *kal-mar-te* UD.12.KÁM
li-me ^{1.d}*šin-še-ya* DUMU ĪR-DINGIR.MEŠ-*ni*
a-di ITI *ša ke-na-a-te* UD.22.KÁM
li-me KIMIN-*ma*
¹*mu-ut-ta*
i+na ŠU ¹[*p*]*u-ša*
(3 lines undeciphered)
a-na nap-ti-ni ša ^{1.d}MAŠ-GIŠ.KU-*aš-šur*
ù tal-pi-ti ša ^{1.d}MAŠ-GIŠ.KU-*aš-šur-ma*
ša iš-tu ITI *kal-mar-te* UD.12.KÁM
li-me ^{1.d}*šin-še-ya*
a-di ITI KIMIN-*ma* UD.22.KÁM
 [*l*]*i-me* KIMIN-*ma i+na* ŠU ¹*m[u-ut-t]**a*
 [*i*]*t-ta-ki'-lu*
 [¹]*pu-ša ik-ta-šar*
¹2¹ ME 28 UDU.MEŠ
i+na UGU ¹*mu-ut-ta*
ir-te-ḫu
i+na lib-bi ú-šá-kal

400 sheep of the land of Isana
 400 (sheep) of the city of Kulišḫinaš
300 (sheep) of Taḫulu
 Total 800 sheep of the provinces.
 914 sheep, audience-gifts
 of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur.
 Grand total 1,714 sheep
 for (the period) from 12 Kalmartu,
 eponymate of Sin-šeya son of
 Urad-ilani, up to 22 Ša-kenate,
 same eponymate,
 Mutta
 from the charge of [P]uša
 [.....]
 For the meal(s) of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur
 and the disbursals of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur
 for (the period) from 12 Kalmartu,
 eponymate of Sin-šeya,
 up to 22 same month (Ša-kenate), same eponymate,
 in the charge of M[utt]a
 they were consumed.
 Puša ratified (the document).
 228 sheep
 incumbent on Mutta
 remained,
 therefrom he will supply for consumption.⁵

(Seal impression)

No. 95 (A. 113; Donbaz 1976, 15-16, Pl. 1)

⁴ These stages are similarly described in Pedersén 1985, I, 58ff. as Steps I–III.

⁵ The reading *ú-šá-kal* is epigraphically at least as defensible as *ú-šá-DIR* and fully in accord with the terminology of the archive. The causative of *akālu* “to eat, consume” is also used of Mutta in No. 39 (KAJ 221), where the statement “Mutta

This tells us that Mutta received large consignments of sheep from three provinces, two of which are named as Isana and Kulišhinaš. The third is given the name of an individual, Taḥulu, who features in two other texts as a contributor of audience gifts; it is not known if he was a provincial governor. They amount in total to 800. The remainder of the incoming sheep are classed as “audience-gifts for Ninurta-tukul-Aššur”,⁶ and Pedersén has shown that the frequent small *nāmurtu* contributions recorded in the remaining texts of the archive for the time span specified in the text do indeed add up to 914 (p. 63). In the second half of the text it is stated that the sheep (and this presumably refers to the grand total of 1,714) were provided for Ninurta-tukul-Aššur’s table and for other purposes required by him, and this agrees very well with the tablets of the archive, many of which partly or entirely record the issue of animals either for his meals (*ana naptini*) or for a range of purposes which include cultic events connected with the female members of his household, and feeding lions. Presumably the total of these outgoings would have been 1,486, leaving 228 for which Mutta remains liable, but here the other texts are not sufficiently consistent to allow us to match the figures so precisely.

In any case, the match between this document and the other texts is not 100 per cent perfect, firstly because we do not have any document recording the arrival of any of these three large contributions from the provinces. Without text No. 95, we would not know that Mutta had received any animals other than those brought in as audience gifts,⁷ and there is no hint here of the reason just three provinces (if indeed Taḥulu was a provincial governor) should be supplying these large numbers of sheep: If it represents some form of regular taxation of the provinces by the centre, why do we hear of only three contributors? The second mismatch is that text No. 95 takes no account of the oxen received or disbursed, nor does it make any mention of the goats, which, though never received as audience gifts, do feature among the disbursals.

The Personnel

As text No. 95 makes clear, the person in charge here is Ninurta-tukul-Aššur. He is assigned no regnal years of his own in the Assyrian king list,⁸ and he is not accorded the title of king in the archive, which we should certainly expect if he were the king. Yet it is he who receives the audience gifts brought to the palace, who holds meals for which many of the sheep and oxen are destined and who issues instructions for their disbursal for other purposes, “at the word of (*ina abat*) Ninurta-tukul-Aššur” here replacing the phrase “at the word of the king” not

has had consumed” (M. *ul-ta-ki-il*) [not *ul ta-ki-il* which would be a Babylonianism, pace Pedersén 1985, 59]) follows a note of six sheep issued to a house, a purgation ceremony and the lions. This tends to indicate that the word refers metaphorically to consumption by human agents rather than literally to the feeding (up) of animals.

⁶ The specific meaning of “audience gift” for *nāmurtu* was advocated in Postgate 1974, 159–60 and appears to be generally accepted (e.g. Jakob 2003, 81 “Audienzgabe”).

⁷ Though a few texts do seem to mention receipts which are not *nāmurtu*, as noted by Pedersén 1985, 63 centre (No. 9, *piqdu ša šarri*, and No. 98, 100 sheep of Mutakkil-Nusku).

⁸ See CAD T 129a on the phrase *tuppišu*, and now Baker 2010 for an interpretation along the lines of “for one year”.

infrequently encountered in other texts. He evidently acted as a regent during the long reign of Aššur-dan I (1178-1133), and the impression given by this archive is that he was king in all but name.⁹ Nevertheless, the king himself is also mentioned, once as having made an allocation of 40 lambs (*piqdu ša šarri*, No. 9), and otherwise as the father of Kilizayu (Nos. 7; 70, *qe-pu*; 89),¹⁰ of Šamaš-alik-pani who receives one sheep in Nos. 74 and 77 and of Eriba-Adad, apparently bringing an audience gift in No. 91, so we are perhaps entitled to assume that he remained alive but inactive, thanks to advanced age or some other reason.

The two other persons mentioned in text No. 95 are Mutta and Puša.¹¹ Mutta is omnipresent and must have been in everyday control of the transactions of this cell of government. When he is given a title in the tablets he is most often described as an “animal fattener” (*ša kurultiè, ša kur(us)siè*), but in four texts he is identified as a *zāriqu*,¹² and once as a eunuch.¹³ These are not necessarily mutually exclusive designations. Most of the animals involved in these texts were brought in as audience gifts to Ninurta-tukul-Aššur, and the natural assumption is that they were physically presented to him in the palace, which is supported by the regular use of the phrase “which PN ... presented” (*ša PN ... uqarribūni*). Part of Mutta's duties must therefore have been to take over these animals once the presentation had been made, and it makes sense that he held the office of a *zāriqu* which has some role in the organisation of the palace.¹⁴ Equally, as a eunuch, we would expect him to serve in the palace.¹⁵ Once he had taken delivery of the animals, he was then apparently responsible for having them fattened up, hence the third designation. In other words, his duties seem to have included reception of the incoming animals, taking care of them until they were needed and then supplying them for whatever purpose Ninurta-tukul-Aššur ordered.

The role of Puša is more obscure. In No. 95, all the incoming sheep are apparently in his charge (*ina qāt Puša*), but the implications of this are lost in the ensuing break. His appearance elsewhere is in texts from the first months of the archive.¹⁶ The “expenditure of Puša” (*talpittu ša Puša*) listed in No. 2 (one of the earliest texts in the archive) suggests that he was

⁹ The position of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur was described as “Schattenkönig” by Weidner; see Pedersén 1985, 58¹⁰, referring to Brinkman 1968, 102⁵⁶.

¹⁰ Kilizayu in No. 101 and perhaps in No. 41 is a different person.

¹¹ This name is sometimes transcribed Buza, but it seems simpler to associate it with the root *pš* meaning “white” in Assyrian.

¹² Nos. 43; 44; 56; 60; Jakob 2003, 78. The dates of these attestations overlap with texts in which he is called an animal fattener (Pedersén 1985, 59).

¹³ *ša* SAG No. 67 (see Donbaz 1976 Pl. 22).

¹⁴ Cf. Jakob 2003, 80–2. The precise role of the *zāriqu* remains elusive, but involvement with the palace personnel is clearly demonstrated by his role in the Hof- und Haremserlässe. Jakob sees him as belonging to the circle of those officials who were in direct contact with the lower-ranking palace staff (“dem Kreis jener Beamten ... die in unmittelbaren Kontakt zu dem Palastpersonal niederen Stades ... stehen”, p. 81), or as having “supervisory and regulatory functions in close proximity to the ruler” (“Aufsichts- und Ordnungsfunktionen in der näheren Umgebung des Herrschers”, p. 82). Note that presumably the Old Palace, next to which the archive was found, had presumably been replaced by Tukulti-Ninurta's New Palace as the king's principal residence, but it is obviously possible that, not being the king himself, Ninurta-tukul-Aššur was using it as his base (see p. 199).

¹⁵ Some eunuchs held very high positions in government under Tukulti-Ninurta I – see Fischer 1999, 122 on Ušur-namkur-šarri, a eunuch who held the eponymate, and note that the same applies to Libur-zanin-Aššur.

¹⁶ Cf. Pedersén 1985, 59¹⁵, noting that he is “attested in connexion with the use of sheep, more or less responsible during the period 24.6 [=Hibur] -29.8 [=Qarratu]”.

in charge of the two animals in this instance, one of which went to a smith and one to the lions. He also seems to be in charge of sheep in the following month (No. 31:11 [tal]pittu [(ša) 'pu]-ša) and in the month after that (No. 62:3 ša ŠU 'pu-ša). By contrast, in No. 65, he himself receives a sheep, which is included within a total of six sheep logged as “expenditure” (talpittu), and he also receives one in No. 67. Finally, in No. 50 (also relating to the first two months of the archive), we find him receiving a lamb for the meal of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur, and then taking a sheep on two occasions for the lions. The evidence from this archive suggests that he was fairly closely associated with Mutta, perhaps his immediate superior;¹⁷ he is also mentioned in an administrative tablet recording beer and bread issues from the time of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur, apparently “clothing the divinities in the city [...]na”, which shows that he had significant responsibilities in other contexts, without offering a clue to his precise office.¹⁸

The Audience Gifts (Table 4.7)

As already noted, a *nāmurtu* (plural *nāmurātu*) would have been a gift made to someone, usually a superior, on the occasion of an audience with him: this would no doubt have varied with the social standing of both giver and recipient, and with the gravity of the issue which had led to the need for an audience. In ancient Mesopotamia, a typical gift often took the form of one or more animals (compare the *šulmānu* contracts discussed in Chapter 4.5), and this would appear to have been true also for suppliants to the king (or in this case, regent), although we must imagine that other materials could have been brought as audience gifts.¹⁹ As Table 4.7 shows, the audience gifts arrived throughout the year without any obvious variation by season. The great majority of the audience gifts logged in were sheep, but there were also the occasional oxen. Adult male sheep (UDU.NÍTA) were the commonest gift, sometimes accompanied by one or more oxen, or by a couple of the regional breed of sheep called Ḫabḫaeen or a pair of lambs. Only rarely is a single animal presented, and there is a trend towards round numbers, so that 10 occurs eight times and 20 five times, while larger numbers are regularly multiples of 10 or indeed of 100 (something which also applies to the provincial contributions not designated as *nāmurtu*). Only occasionally do we meet ewes, fat-tailed sheep (GUKKAL) or fattened sheep (called *takbāru* or *šākulūtu*). As the tale of the Poor Man of Nippur illustrates, a goat was a poor substitute for a sheep, and no goats are listed among the audience gifts delivered, although somehow Mutta did have at his disposal an occasional one when required by an exorcist.

The persons making these gifts came from different echelons of Assyrian society, as described by Weidner (1935-6, 14ff.). There are the provincial governors of Taidu (on the upper Ḫabur), Ḫalahḫu (north-east of Nineveh), and a place possibly to be read Aḫurra.²⁰

¹⁷ The fact that he “ratified” (*iktašar*) the transaction recorded in No. 95 also suggests that he may have ranked higher in the hierarchy than Mutta, to judge from the officials who fulfil this role in other archives (see pp. 72–3).

¹⁸ A. 842 in Istanbul, Ass. 14382b, not from the Mutta archive (Donbaz 1992, 119–20).

¹⁹ For audience gifts to the Offerings Overseers see p. 103.

²⁰ In No. 17, but cf. Donbaz 1980, 217 doubting the reading; location uncertain. Conceivably = Ḫurra, mentioned before Šuduḫi in the upper Ḫabur region by Adad-nirari I (Nashef 1982, 132).

Table 4.7. *The audience gifts*

A = GUD(.MEŠ) “oxen”									
B = UDU(.MEŠ) “sheep”									
C = UDU.NÍTA(.MEŠ) “male sheep”									
D = UDU Ḫabḫayu “Ḫabḫaeen sheep”									
E =UDU.NIM/SILA ₄ (.MEŠ) “lambs”									
F = other sheep [GUKKAL(.MEŠ) No. 47; 90; 105; UDU.DAM.GÀR.MEŠ No. 47]									
Steward = (LÚ.)AGRIG									
Governor = <i>bēl pāḫiti</i>									
Mayor = <i>ḫāziānu</i>									
Chief flock-master = GAL NA.GADA.MEŠ(- <i>te</i>)									
Village inspector = GAL URU.DIDLI.MEŠ(- <i>te</i>)									
Text	Animals						Contributor	Profession	Date**
	A	B	C	D	E	F			
51			8				Tamriya		1.vi.Aš
52			20				Adad-zera-iddina	Chief flock-master	12. vi.Aš
53			25				Ninurtayu	Governor	19. vi.Aš
30a		5					Urad-Ištar	<i>alaḫḫinu</i>	2.vii
30b					2		Tamriya	Steward	2.vii
32		6 [?]					Samnuḫa-ašared, SaiKdu, Adad-bela-ušur, Adusi, Šalli-lamur ^x		3.vii
35			6				Adad-murabbi	Governor	13.vii
55a		5					Sin-mušallim	Steward	13.vii
55b		3					Kiṣir -Adad	Mayor	13.vii
55c		1					Urad-Ištar	Steward	13.vii
33			10				Urad-Kube	Mayor	16.vii
34			6				Bulalu	Steward	19.vii
56			5				Bel-šunu	Steward of Ša-samaya	22.vii
50		9					Adad-zera-iddina		28.vii
38		16					Tamriya		11.viii
60			15				Tamriya	Steward	11.viii
40		20					Marduk-bela-ušur son of Tarri[...]		17.viii
64			8				Iqiššani	Mayor of Nineveh	20.viii
44			20				Marduk-bela-ušur	Steward	22.viii
43a		8					Iqiššani, son of Šamaš- aḫa-iddina		22 [?] .viii
43b		8					Kidite	LÚ.GAL <i>kar-r[u ...]</i>	22 [?] .viii
68			10				Urad-Ištar	Steward of Ḫuṣṣi ⁺	24.viii
105						7		Sutaeans (DUMU <i>na-gi su-ti-e</i>)	28.viii
47a						6 + 5 ⁺	Mudammeq-Marduk	Village inspector	29.viii

(continued)

Table 4.7. (*continued*)

Text	Animals						Contributor	Profession	Date**
	A	B	C	D	E	F			
47b			1		1		Kiřir-Adad	Mayor	29.viii
4		3					Sin-muřallim	Steward [cf. No. 103 12.ix]	14.ix
82			20				Adad-zera-iddina	Chief flock-master	18.ix
78						10 ^s		Sutaeans (<i>su-ti-ú^{mes}</i>)	28.ix
79		5					[...]		[?].ix
10	11		20				Sin-balassu-ereř	Governor of Taidu	1.x
12	3						Sin-[muřallim]	Steward of House of Ařřur-[...]	5.x
13			6	2			Ařřur-muřabři	Village inspector of ęalaęęu	6.x
84		10					Marduk-bela-uřur	Steward of Amasaku	20.x
85			8	2			Mudammeq-Marduk	Village inspector of ęalaęęu	23.x
86					4		Bel-řunu	Steward of řa-samaya	26.x
106			10				Nappařanu	Steward of House of Sin-luřallim-řarra	8.xi
88			5				Adad-řuma-iddina	Suęaeans	9.xi
17			10				Ninurtayu	Governor of Aęurra(?)	17.xi
18	5	100					Taęulu		3.xii
19a			8				Adad-bel-gabbe	Leader of (<i>řa</i> UGU) the (Ar)raphaeans	4(+?). xii
19b			6					The Nar-zuęinaeans [†]	4(+?). xii
91a			9			5	Eriba-Adad, son of the king		9.xii
91b			2	1			[PN]		9.xii
21			5	2			Eru(a)-apla-iddina, son of Same		21.xii
22	8 [‡]						Ařřur-bela-uřur	Steward	26.xii
90a	8		170			30	Ařřur-bela-uřur	Steward of House of Ařřur-iddin	26.xii
90b			24			6	Bulalu	Steward of House of Babu-aęa-iddina	26.xii
93			4				Bel-řunu	Steward	2.i
92a			10				Iqiřřani son of řamař-aęa-iddina	Mayor	9.i
92b			3				Urad-Iřtar	Steward of ęuřři	9.i
23a			5	2			Mudammeq-[Marduk]	Village inspector of ęalaęęu	11.i
23b			3				Manuęi	Steward of House of Sin-uballi [‡]	11.i
24a		7					Adad-zera-iddina	Chief flock-master	2.ii
24b					2 [%]			Sutaeans (DUMU <i>na-gi su-ti-e</i>)	2.ii
94a	2		18		3		Tamriya		12.ii
94b			2		1		Marduk-bela-uřur		12.ii

Text	Animals						Contributor	Profession	Date**
	A	B	C	D	E	F			
107a			6		1		Kuda[nayu]		23.ii
107b					3		Adad-rim-ilani	Steward	23.ii
113			10				Kudanayu		28.ii
96	1	8			5		Urad-Ištar	Steward of House of Ištar-tuballissu	3.iii
112			8		[3]		Urad-Ištar		[?].iii
25			6		2		Tukulti-Adad		4.iii
28a			6				Erua-apla-ušur	Governor of Ḫalahḫu	7.iii
28b			7				Nappašanu	Steward of House of Sin-lušallim-šarra	7.iii
26a			5		2		Bel-šunu		15.iii
26b			5		2		Adad-zera-iddina	Chief flock-master	15.iii
26c	1		15				Marduk-bela-ušur	Steward	15.iii
26d			100		10		Sin-mušallim	Steward	
26d		1			2		Sidannaya	Steward	15.iii
27			10		2		Mannu-luyu	(Man) of Ṭabete	18.iii
97a			10		2			The Ṭabataean king	20.iii
97b			4		2		Kudanayu		20.iii
97c			2		2		Urad-Kube	Mayor	21.iii
29	3		50				Puššayu	(Man) of Nar-zuḫini	22.iii
99a			3				Bulalu		13.v
99b			5				Sin-mušallim		13.v
99c			3				Adad-rim-ilani		13.v
114a			5		2		Kudanayu	Chief flock-master	30 ³ .[?]
114b			10		2		Urad-Kube	Mayor	30.[?]
104a	8						Aššur-bela-ušur		no date
104b	4						Ṭaḫulu		no date
104c	3						Sin-mušallim		no date
104d	1						Adad-rim-ilani		no date
104e	1						Sin-balassu-ereš		no date
104f	2						Tamriya		no date
104g	1						Urad-Ištar		no date
104h	1						Urad-Kube		no date

**The dates are given as far as possible in chronological order. The months are indicated by Roman numerals using the numbering applied by Pedersén (1985, 58ff.), in which the earliest month attested is Ḫibur(=vi) in the eponymate of Aššur-šešibanni. This is then followed by a new year named after the eponym Sin-šeya, with month Šippu(=vii). The latest month is Apu-šarrani(=v) in the same year.

× Five PNs each giving 1 sheep, but the total is written as 6. “They presented (them) to him on the occasions when Ninurta-tukul-Aššur came down to the courtyard to bathe in water”.

† For the reading of this toponym here and in No. 92b see Nashef 1982, 133.

† 6 fat-tailed sheep (GUKKAL.MEŠ) and 5 or perhaps 4 ewes (UDU.DAM.GĀR.MEŠ).

§ 10 fattened sheep (UDU *takbāru*).

† No PN given. The occasion is “when PN died”.

† Totalling 6 “fattened” (*šākulūtu*) and 2 “gifts” (*ri-mu-a-tu* ^{sic}), see collation, Donbaz 1980, 218.

% “2 lambs together with their mothers” (*adi ummātešunu*).

Table 4.8. *Stewards bringing audience-gifts*

Steward	House of	Town	Texts
Adad-rim-ilani			99; 104; 107
Aššur-bela-ušur	Aššur-iddin		22; 90; 104
Belšunu		Šasamaya	56; 86; 93
Bulalu	Babu-aḥa-iddina		34; 90b; 99
Manuqi	Sin-uballiṭ		23
Marduk-bela-ušur		Amasaku	26; 84
Nappašanu	Sin-lušallim-šarra		28; 106
Sin-mušallim			4; 26; 55; 99b; 101; 103; 104
Sinnaya			26
Sin-[....]	Aššur-[....]		12
Tamriya			30; 38; 51; 60; 94a; 104
Urad-Ištar (I)	Ištar-tuballissu		55; 96; 104
Urad-Ištar (II)		Ḫuṣṣi	68; 92

Across the Lower Zab and apparently not formally incorporated into the provincial system were the authorities in power at (N)arzuḫina (Nos. 19b; 29) and Adad-bel-gabbe “the man over the (A)rraphaeans”, presumably based at Arrapha (modern Kerkuk), in the 14th century the capital of the small kingdom which included Nuzi. Also of intermediate status between independence and incorporation into the Land of Aššur must have been Mannu-luyu, the “man” (No. 27) or “king” (No. 97a; his name not given, but probably the same delivery) of Ṭabete. This was a nominally independent city on the Ḫabur whose identity has been clarified by the Japanese excavations at Tell Taban: he sends audience gifts, while on one occasion his envoy (*mār šipri*), Adad-aḥa-iddina, who brought the gift to Ninurta-tukul-Aššur, was himself granted an allocation of two sheep by the king’s son Kilizayu (No. 70).²¹ The village inspectors (*rab ālāni*), were part of the regular state administration in the countryside: two of them from Ḫalahḫu province brought audience gifts on separate occasions. Urad-Kube, mayor (*ḫāziānu*) of an unnamed city, occurs four times, Iqīššani the mayor of Nineveh features in three texts and Kišir-Adad, another mayor whose town is not specified, occurs twice.

Many of the audience gifts were brought by stewards on behalf of their master’s “House”.²² Several of them occur more than once, and they were evidently well known to the writers of the tablets as their titles are only occasionally given. Sometimes they are simply referred to as “steward”, and frustratingly we are never told whose “House” was represented by the two most regular contributors, Sin-mušallim and Tamriya. We do, though, hear of stewards of the Houses of Aššur-iddin, Babu-aḥa-iddina, Ištar-tuballissu, Sin-lušallim-šarra and Sin-uballiṭ. Unfortunately we cannot positively identify any of these “heads of house”. If the name written ^d30-TI in No. 23b is correctly understood as Sin-uballiṭ, this could be the Offerings

²¹ Cf. Jakob 2003, 288⁸ but note that Donbaz’s copy reads *it-ta-nu-ni-šu-ú-ni* (not *it-ta-nu-šu-nu-ú-ni*).

²² Cf. Weidner 1935–6, 15.

Overseer of this name, active in the mid 12th century.²³ By contrast it seems likely that the name Babu-aḡa-iddina refers to the well-known personage of this name (see Chapter 4.4), despite the date of this archive, which must be after his death. Conceivably the same might apply to Aššur-iddin, also the name of a high-ranking personage from an earlier generation.²⁴

More than once several stewards are listed together, bringing audience gifts on the same occasion (e.g. Nos. 99 – four together; 104 – five or more), and this might lead us to conclude that there were in fact only a limited number of these elite “houses” which needed to maintain regular contact with the palace and to oil the wheels of this relationship with a traditional gift. By contrast only three stewards are identified by a toponym (Šasamaya, Amasaku and Ḥuṣṣi – see Table 4.8); of these Amasaku is a provincial capital near Taidu on the upper Ḥabur, and we may assume that the steward was attached to the governor’s palace there. The other two places are otherwise unknown; they seem unlikely to have been the location of a palace. We can hardly guess whether the establishments they managed were state or private institutions, but for an instance of a steward at a rural centre which was not a provincial capital we need only turn to Tell Sabi Abyad, where one of the protagonists of the archive was the steward Tammittu.²⁵

We may wonder whether we should expect to find the palace’s own steward (or the Chief Steward) presenting an audience gift. None of the stewards known to us from the Stewards’ Archive makes an appearance here as a contributor, with the possible exception of Samnuḡa-ašared, whose name is listed without a title in No. 32, alongside four others (one of them, Aššur-bela-ušur, was probably the steward of the House of Aššur-iddin), each presenting a sheep.

Interim Allocation

Unlike a gold watch or a fountain pen, a sheep cannot simply be stored in a cupboard until wanted. It seems likely that immediately after a presentation Ninurta-tukul-Aššur would have passed the animal(s) over to Mutta or his assistant, and it would then have been Mutta’s job to arrange for the animals to be guarded and fed until they were sent to their final destination. The situation reported in No. 103 was no doubt an exception: “the sheep, audience-gift of Sin-mušallim, the steward, were not received. Sin-apla-iddina, the door-keeper, said ‘Adad-bela-ušur [another steward] took (them)’”. When they are handed over under a temporary arrangement they were not usually said to be “issued” (*tadin, tadnū*), but “entrusted” (*paqid, paqdū* and sometimes *paqqudū*²⁶). Quite where oxen went remains unclear,²⁷ but we

²³ Freydank 1992a, 277. In these texts the component *-uballit* is consistently written *ú-TI.LA*.

²⁴ A Chief Chancellor (*sukkallu rabiū*) in the 13th century and father of Ili-pada, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999b.

²⁵ See provisionally Jakob 2003, 99; and Wiggermann 2000.

²⁶ For *paqqudū*, another instance of the pluralising D stem, see Nos. 12; 20; 22; 78; 88; 102; 105. It is notable that in all these cases except No. 105 we have the subjunctive form *paqqudūni*, hinting that the D stem may have been preferred where the equivalent G stem plural form *paqdūni* would have been indistinguishable from the singular.

²⁷ In No. 16 the audience gift comprised one ox and ten sheep: the sheep are entrusted as normal to Mutta, but the ox is entrusted to Bana-ša-Adad, a brewer. Oxen also go to the brewers or bakers in No. 12. Pedersén says that the brewers “often received a head of cattle (GUD) instead of a sheep” (1985, 60).

are often told what happened to the sheep. Sometimes they were entrusted to Mutta himself, but others went to a variety of temporary caretakers – a gardener, the brewers and flour processors and gatekeepers.

No. 44 (KAJ 264²⁸)

20 UDU.NÍTA.MEŠ *na-mur-tu*
ša^{1.d}AMAR.UTU–EN–PAB AGRIG
a-na^{1.d}MAŠ-GIŠ.KU–*aš-šur ú-qar-ri-bu-ni*
i+na lib-be-šu-nu 7 UDU.MEŠ *a-na*¹*mu-ta-a*
¹⁶*za-ri-qi pa-aq-du*
 3 *a-na*^{1.d}UTU–NE LÚ.NU.GIŠ.SAR
re-ša a-na qa-è-e pa-aq-du
 1 *a-na* UGU ¹*ka-ba-ši-ni*
 LÚ.NI.DUḪ
 1 *a-na* UGU ¹IR–*aš-šur* LÚ.NI.DUḪ
 1 *a-na* UGU ¹*aš-šur-de-ni-di-in*
 1 *a-na* UGU ¹*šil-lí-^dAG*
 1 *a-na* UGU ¹10–SIG₅ LÚ.NI.DUḪ
 1 É ¹*ak-bi-ru* LÚ.SIM
 1 É ¹*ni-nu-a-ie-e* LÚ.SIM
 1 É ¹*pu-lx – x⁷-e a-lāh-hi-ni*
 2 *a-na pa-an*^dDUMU.<MUNUS>–*a-nim*
ep-šu
 ITI *qar-ra-a-tu* UD.22.KÁM *li-mu*
^{1.d}*šin-še-a*
 DUMU IR–DINGIR.MEŠ–*ni*

20 male sheep, audience-gift
 which Marduk-bela-ušur, steward,
 presented to Ninurta-tukul-Aššur.
 From these, 7 sheep were entrusted
 to Mutta, the usher,
 3 were entrusted to Šamaš-nuri the
gardener, to be held in waiting.
 1 – for Kabašinu,
 the gatekeeper.
 1 – for Urad-Aššur, the gatekeeper.
 1 – for Aššur-deni-din
 1 – for Šilli-Nabu
 1 – for Adad-da'iq, the gatekeeper.
 1 – the House of Akbiru, the brewer.
 1 – the House of Ninuayu, the brewer.
 1 – the House of PN²⁹ the flour-processor.
 2 – before (the goddess) Marat-Anim.
were sacrificed.
 Month of Qarratu, 22nd day, eponymate
 of Sin-šeya, son of Urad-ilani.

The Gardener

Šamaš-nuri the gardener evidently managed a garden, or more precisely an orchard (*ana*^{giš}*ki-ri-e*, No. 38), in which he was able to confine the animals and probably pasture them on the lower tiers of vegetation. On several occasions³⁰ it is specified that he was given the sheep “to be held in waiting” as in text No. 44.

The Brewers and Flour Processers

The orchard was clearly a temporary expedient, but Mutta was an animal fattener, and when the animals were to be deliberately fattened up they were frequently sent where the food was: to the brewers and/or the flour processors. Text No. 1 says: “Sheep which were received for fattening (*a-na šam-ra-e*): Total 5 sheep which [were issued] to be fed (*a-na ša-ku-li*), the brewers (and) the flour-processers (*alahhinu*) have received from the charge of Mutta”. On occasion (e.g. No. 78), sheep are issued to individual brewers or flour processors mentioned

²⁸ Collations Weidner 1935–6, 46; Donbaz 1980, 223.

²⁹ Perhaps the same as Budaya or Putayaza in other texts, see Pedersén 1985, 60¹⁸.

³⁰ For example texts Nos. 10; 53; 60.

by name, or to their houses (as in No. 44: the House of Akbiru, of Ninuayu), but both the brewers and the flour processors seem to have had a collective establishment (“house”). In No. 20, sheep are listed “which were entrusted to the house of the brewer(s) and the flour-processor(s)” (*ša ina É LÚ.ŠIM u^{la}alahhīni paqqudūni*), and in No. 22 oxen “which were entrusted to the house of the brewer(s) to be fed”. The institutional status of these specialists remains uncertain. We might be entitled to deduce from No. 88, where five male sheep were entrusted to “the House of the flour-processers of the temple (É DINGIR)”, that these are the same brewers and flour processors as are often mentioned in the same breath in the Offerings Archive; but this is not invariably the case, because in No. 101 one ewe was assigned to the “flour-processor of the House of Babu-aḫa-iddina”. In any case, the practice of fattening sheep has a long history in Mesopotamian society, and it seems clear that the idea was to feed the animals on the waste products draff and bran generated by the processing of grain into beer and flour.³¹

The Gatekeepers

The other main recipients of temporary allocations are the gates and gatekeepers of the city. In No. 44, three of the recipients mentioned by name are gatekeepers (*etū*, wr. LÚ.NI.DUḪ). That these are not (as we might have expected), porters in the palace (as Sin-apla-iddina in No. 103 probably was), but persons responsible for the city gates, follows from No. 102 where two gatekeepers are explicitly associated with their gates (Kabašinu “of the Tabira Gate”, and Urad-Aššur “of the Aššur Gate”). This allows us to bring texts like No. 44 mentioning gatekeepers together with Nos. 40 and 101, in which allocations to gates are listed. No. 40 lists sheep “which Mutta entrusted (*upaqqidūni*) to the work-house (É *nupāri*)³² and the Gates”, and before this lists individual assignments to the gates of Aššur, of Enlil, of the Towers (*asāte*), and of Tisari, Šerua and Tibera. A similar listing in No. 101 has the gates of Tabira, Aššur, Šamaš, Tisaru and Šerua.³³ Weidner suggested that the sheep went to the gates to be sacrificed,³⁴ but the use of the verb *paqādu* in these contexts indicates rather that they were entrusted to the gatekeepers to be cared for. Why this arrangement was made remains unknown, but possibly the gatekeepers were able to supervise animals grazing on the skirts of the city mound just outside each gateway.

The Final Destination

The final disposition of the animals was divided by text No. 95 into “the meal(s) of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur” and the “expenditure(s) of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur”, referred to with the technical

³¹ For the use of these as fodder compare CAD T 452–4 s.v. *tuhhu*; Stol 1971, 170–2. Other texts mentioning brewers and/or flour processors are Nos. 12; 45; 48; 105.

³² On the “workhouse” (*bēt nupāri*) see Freydank 2006, 215–18.

³³ For these gates (and the alternation between *bābu* and *abullu* in their naming) see Weidner 1935–6, 22–3.

³⁴ “es werden Schafe für Opfer, die dort dargebracht werden sollten, bereitgestellt”, Weidner 1935–6, 22. Pedersén expressed doubts about this idea (1985, 61²³).

Table 4.9. *Animals for the meals of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur (NtA)*

No.	GUD	UDU	UDU.NÍTA	UDU.NIM	nubattu	Details
11		1			•	
15				1	•	
36			7			<i>kī</i> NtA <i>ana</i> UGU <i>kisallāte</i> A.MEŠ <i>ramāki ittanaradūni</i> “when NtA repeatedly came down to wash the courtyards with water”
50			1+1+1			
54				2		
69		1			•	
72		1			•	
76		1				<i>ana kisallāte ana</i> <i>naptēni epīš</i> <i>ina pan pe’ette</i> <i>uštābšilu kī</i> NtA <i>ittanaradūni</i> “slaughtered for the courtyards for the meal” “they cooked on charcoal when NtA repeatedly came down”
79		1				
81		1			•	
89	1					<i>ana É LÚ.MU</i> “to the cook’s house”
109		1			•	
110		1				

accounting term *talpittu*. These destinations fall into a few easily demarcated groups and are dealt with accordingly.

The Royal Meals

The meals (*naptunu*) are clearly identified in the texts of the archive (Table 4.9). Given the time span, these issues for Ninurta-tukul-Aššur are surprisingly infrequent. Except in No. 89, when an ox was passed to the “Cook’s House”, the animals are lambs on just two occasions, otherwise they are adult sheep, probably always males, as made explicit where the term UDU.NÍTA is used. In most cases the meal (*naptunu*) is qualified by *nubattu* “evening (meal)” or *nubattušu* “his evening (meal)”. Occasionally circumstantial details are given: “when Ninurta-tukul-Aššur came down to wash the courtyards with water” (No. 36); compare No. 79, where the word *naptunu* is not used, but the text states “they cooked it on charcoal, when Ninurta-tukul-Aššur came down”. A similar event is presumably involved in No. 76, where the sheep was “sacrificed for the courtyards for the meal”.

It is easy to imagine that the king, or rather in this instance the regent, would have presided over formal meals including cooked meat on a regular basis.³⁵ Weidner’s opinion was that all the meals were ritual events, but although in the cases just mentioned they are associated with ceremonial activities in the courtyards, there is no obvious reason the meals should not normally have been secular events.

³⁵ Compare the issues of sheep for the royal entourage mentioned in the Tell Ali texts (Chapter 5).

The Lions (Table 4.10)

The most consistent disbursements in the archive are to the lions. These are most frequently referred to as the “sons of the lions” (Col. C), but also just as “lions” (Cols. A and B). Probably there is no difference between them, but because the word *ṣaḥ(h)arâte*, presumably meaning “(lion) cubs” is once used alongside *ni-še* (No. 50),³⁶ it is possible that we should accept that the Col. C entries really do refer to young animals as opposed to the adults in Cols. A and B. That the royal household regularly fed lions, at a rate of about one every two days, has to be placed in the dossier of evidence for an association of the king of animals with the king of Assyria; and that they were real enough seems to be confirmed by one entry in text No. 89, where we learn that Ninurta-tukul-Aššur ordered an ox to be given to a eunuch called Samu “as the lion seized him” (*ki-i UR.MAḤ ú-ša-bi-tu-šu-ni*).

Sacrificial and Similar Uses

An important use for the sheep was as part of rituals required by the palace’s internal affairs. When the animal was slaughtered in this context we find the neutral verb *epiš* “was done”; it is not, however, restricted to religious contexts because the same phraseology is used for secular occasions, such as for the meals (e.g. No. 76), and, despite the etymological connection of *epāšu* with *nēpušu* “(ritual) procedure”, it seems most accurate to render it in all contexts as “slaughter”. The majority of the ritual sacrifices were made in connection with women associated with the royal household.³⁷ One group of issues went to one of three exorcists (*āšipu*, wr. LÚ.MAŠ.MAŠ), Marduk-eressu (Nos. 37 [coll. Donbaz 1980, 220]; 63; 73; 75), Riš-Marduk (No. 63; 66) and Marduk-nadin-aḥḥe (No. 80).

4 UD.U.NÍTA.MEŠ 1 MÁŠ <i>a-na te-lil-te ša munusšad-da-it-t[e]</i> ¹ <i>ri-iš-^dAMAR.UTU.MAŠ.MAŠ ma-ḥi-ir</i>	4 male sheep, 1 male goat, for the purification of Šadda’ittu, <u>Riš-Marduk the exorcist has received.</u>
4 UD.U.NÍTA.MEŠ 1 MÁŠ <i>a-na te-lil-te ša munusša-la-a</i> ¹ <i>dAMAR.UTU-KAM-su.MAŠ.MAŠ ma-ḥi-ir</i> <u>UD 16.KAM</u>	4 male sheep, 1 male goat, for the purification of Sala, <u>Marduk-eressu the exorcist has received -16th day.</u>
1 MÁŠ <i>a-na ták-pir-t[i]</i> <i>i+na UD 14.KÁM</i> [1 MÁŠ] <i>a-na ták-pir-t[i]</i> <i>i+na UD.17.KÁM</i>	1 male goat for purgation - <u>on the 14th day</u> [1 male] goat for purgation <u>on the 17th day</u>
PAB 11 UD.U.MEŠ <i>a-di MÁŠ.MEŠ</i> <i>a-na te-lil-te ták-pir-t[i]</i>	Total 11! sheep including male goats, for purification (and) purgation,

³⁶ Leading Weidner (1935–6, 27²⁰¹) to suggest that *ṣaḥ(h)arâte* is the correct reading of TUR/DUMU.MEŠ in this context. Weidner’s suggestion that *ša-ḥa-ra-te* refers to lion cubs is supported by the mention of “25th day”, falling between issues to “lions” (*ni-še*) on the 16th, 19th., 23rd and 29th days, but nowhere else are “lions” mentioned alongside “sons of lions”, so it is hard to be certain if the adults and cubs are really being differentiated.

³⁷ On the four principal ladies (Reminni, Šadda’ittu, G/Kizaya and Sala) see Weidner 1935–6, 11–13.

Table 4.10. *Animals issued to the lions*

A = <i>ni-še</i> B = UR.MAḪ(.MEŠ) C = DUMU.MEŠ UR.MAḪ(.MEŠ) D = <i>ša-ḫa-ra-te</i>								
No.	A	B	C	D	UDU(.MEŠ) “sheep”	UDU.NÍTA “male sheep”	UDU.NIM “lamb”	Total
2			•		1			1
3			•		1			1
5			•				1	1
8			•		6			6
11			•		1			1
14			•		5			5
31			•			[x]		[x]
35			•			1		1
39	•					2		2
40	•				1			1
42		•			1			1
46			•		9			9
47			•		1			1
49			•					
50	•			•	1+5+1+1			9
58			•		5			5
61		•			1			1
65	•				1+1			2
67	•				2			2
71			•		5			5
72	•				1+1			2
75			•		1			1
77			•		5			5
79			•		1			1
87			•		5			5
108			•		2+2+2+2			8
109			•		1+1+1+1			4
110			•		1+1+2			4
111			•		1 x 8			8
Total					87	3(+x)	1	

MAŠ.MAŠ.MEŠ *maḫ-ru*
a-na la ma-ša-e šá-tí-ir

the exorcists have received.
 Written down so as not to forget.

ITI *qar-ra-tu* UD.17.KÁM
li-mu ^{1.4}30-še-ia

Month of Qarratu, 17th day,
 eponymate of Sin-šeya.

No. 63 (Donbaz 1976, Pl.19 A.3188)

On the two main occasions in No. 63, a different exorcist received the same consignment of four sheep and one goat, in each case for the “purification” (*tēliltu*) of one of the palace

women. The first mentioned, Šadda'ittu, recurs several times in the archive. She is called “the woman of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur” in No. 59, and in No. 61 4 sheep were again issued when “she went down for purification”. In No. 42 a sheep was slaughtered (*epiš*) in the House of Adad-bela-ušur³⁸ “for a sacrifice (*ana SISKUR*) of Šadda'ittu”, and her bed is in some way involved in the issue of an ox in No. 89. The reason for her purification was not stated, but she is not alone: in No. 63 (and, probably the same occasion, No. 62), Sala receives the same treatment involving the combination of four sheep and one goat, and this combination is also issued for the purification of Reminni in Nos. 37 and 73 (exorcist Marduk-eressu), and in No. 66 (exorcist Riš-Marduk). No. 66 exceptionally bears a seal impression, and because it describes Reminni also as “the woman of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur”, Weidner and Opitz considered her the queen and attributed the seal to her. However, she shares this title with Šadda'ittu, and the seal is presumably that of the exorcist.

Also listed in No. 63 are two single goats “for a purgation” (*ana takpirtu*), a procedure whose difference from “purification” is obscure to us, but was also carried out by the exorcists and may have been less elaborate if it required only a single goat. This text does not specify who the purgation was for, but in No. 7 three goats were allocated to a purgation for a fourth lady of the court called Kizaya (more often Gizaya), and it seems likely that “the procedure of Šadda'ittu” for which a single goat was issued in No. 59 was also a *takpirtu*. The word *nēpušu*, which refers to a “(ritual) procedure”, is applied to sheep sacrifices associated with Kizaya, as in No. 103, where a sacrifice was made in the Temple of Gula, the goddess of healing, on the occasion of her illness:

[1] UDU.NÍTA *i+na* UD.14.KÁM
[*i+*] *na* É ^d*gu-la*
a-na pa-an ^d*gu-la*
ki-i ^{munus}*gi-za-ia*
mar-šu-tu-ú-ni
e-piš

One male sheep on the 14th day (of Kalmartu),
in the House of Gula
before Gula
as Gizaya
was ill,
was slaughtered.

No. 103 (Donbaz 1976 Pl. 9 A.1765), 1-6

No. 4, which records a sheep slaughtered “on the 14th day, before Gula [goddess of medicine], when Gizaya's innards were not well” probably refers to the same occasion. Her illness does not seem to have cleared up instantly: on the 17th day of the same month another sheep was issued to the exorcist Marduk-nadin-aḫḫe when a further ritual procedure was carried out for Gizaya (No. 80); unfortunately the details of the reason remain undeciphered, but two days later a third sheep was issued to Marduk-eressu “for the ritual procedure of Gizaya, when he carried out the procedure for the *ipu* of the palace” (No. 75: *ki-i né-pa-ša a-na i-pi* É.GAL-*lim e-pu-šu-ú-ni*). The word *ipu*, which also occurred in

³⁸ Adad-bela-ušur takes one sheep in No. 10, and in No. 103 seems to have taken away some sheep even before they could be “received” by the establishment. He also receives one sheep in No. 32, another sheep is issued to his House in No. 39 on the 14th Qarratu, three days earlier, and an ox in No. 89, “when a son came out for his House”. The evidence suggests he may have been quite highly placed.

No. 80, has a clear gynaecological association, and possibly it refers here to a foetus either unborn or miscarried.

Neither Gizaya nor Sala is given the description of “woman of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur”, nor is it clear if the two ladies who do bear that title were in fact his wives.³⁹ Some at least may have been among the “concubines” (^{munus}*e-si-ra-tu*)⁴⁰ to whom a sheep was allocated in No. 57; this text still probably refers to building work on the “new houses”, and as to this day in Mesopotamia a sheep was no doubt sacrificed on significant architectural occasions: in No. 49 two sheep were slaughtered “onto the foundations of the new houses”,⁴¹ while in No. 7 “Šarru-mudammeq the perfumer slaughtered 1 sheep before Šerua, a sacrifice (*nīqu*) of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur for the roof of the palace”.⁴² Other sacrifices (UDU.SISKUR, Nos. 7, 38) or animals slaughtered “before” (*ana pān*) a deity are mentioned occasionally, most frequently to the moon god Sin, on the 1 or 2.vii (No. 50:5), 11.vii (No. 31) and 12.vii (No. 50:26 “sacrifices in the House of Sin”), 11.viii (No. 60⁴³) and 12.ix (No. 7:24). Further details are not given, but it seems likely that sacrifices were made on the occasion of the full moon and perhaps the first visible crescent (the hilal). Marat-Anim, “daughter of Anu”, is a sobriquet of Lamaštu, the dangerous childbirth demon,⁴⁴ and sacrifices to her may well belong in the same context as the exorcists’ activities on behalf of the women of the palace. One sheep “was slaughtered before Marat-Anim for the palace” in No. 7, two in No. 44 and three were issued “for sacrifices (*ni-qi-a-te*) to Marat-Anim” in No. 40. Other deities for whom a sacrifice was provided are Šarrat-nip̄i (two sheep, No. 49) and Belat-Ekalli (one ox, No. 89). The slaughter of a sheep for the otherwise unattested and mysterious *nu-ga-ti-pi* of Ištar of Arbail is recorded in No. 76, and offerings to the Gula Temple for the health of K/Gizaya have already been mentioned.

On one occasion, an ox⁴⁵ was slaughtered “for the House of the Kings” (*a-[na] É MAN. MEŠ-ni e-piš*, No. 89:15-16), and in No. 84 a sheep was assigned to the “House of the Kings” (É LUGAL.MEŠ-ni) accompanied by a *sūtu* of wine (*iš-tu* 1BÁN GIŠ.GEŠTIN.MEŠ). These must be funerary offerings to the mausoleum, which in Neo-Assyrian times at least was located just south of the Old Palace.⁴⁶

³⁹ Weidner 1935–6, 11.

⁴⁰ On *esirtu* “concubine” here see Landsberger 1935–6, 144–5; CAD E, 236–7. Weidner’s reading of the photograph of this tablet has to be emended after Donbaz 1976 Pl. 33, giving the word *ú-ra-su* (rather than a mention of “the roof”) in l. 3.

⁴¹ *a-na* UGU *uš-še ša É.ĪI.A.MEŠ GIBIL.MEŠ ep-šu*.

⁴² 1 UDU *a-na pa-an* ⁴*še-ru-a* UDU.SISKUR *ša* ^{1.d}MAŠ-GIŠ.KU-*aš-šur a-na ú-ru É.GAL-lim* ¹LUGAL-*mu-dam-me-eq mu-ra-qi-ú e-ta-pa-áš*. In a few texts a sacrifice seems to be made “for the palace” (Nos. 7; 76; 89:9); the phrase *a-na É.GAL-lim* may literally mean that, but there is a possibility that it is a circumlocution for “the queen” (cf. Postgate 2001c).

⁴³ The same issue probably listed in No. 38 as *ana* UDU.SISKUR *ša* UD.11.KÁM (without mention of Sin).

⁴⁴ See CAD M/i, 304.

⁴⁵ Donbaz’s transliteration has 1 MÁŠ here, but the addition refers only to oxen and his copy does not indicate space for an extra sign.

⁴⁶ That the kings in this phrase have passed on is obvious, because one would not normally have more than one living Assyrian king in a single building: see Donbaz 1992, a tablet also from the time of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur, though not from this archive, recording offerings to the “House of Kings”.

Personal Gifts

A few of these sheep destined for cultic use, including the offering to Šerua for the palace roof, are described as *rīmūtu* “gifts” (with an irregular plural *ri-mu-a-te*, Nos. 7; 22), but the majority of such gifts were ordered by Ninurta-tukul-Aššur as a present to be made to an individual, embracing a range of situations. They are sometimes no doubt rewards for specific services rendered: in No. 47 we have sheep presented to a (copper-)smith, and an ironsmith (at this date probably the more specialist craftsman). Although not explicitly identified as *rīmūtu*, two sheep are given to another ironsmith in No. 43, while single sheep go to a bronze smith in No. 50 and a goldsmith in No. 84. Other craftsmen who may have been accepting rewards for good service include the “engraver” (*kapšarru*; No. 83), the harbour master Šallilamur (No. 83; cf. No. 41), an expert in architectural matters (*šeleppayu*;⁴⁷ No. 47), and the exorcist ʿab-ili, who receives a sheep in Nos. 50 and 61. On the instructions of the king’s son Kilizayu the envoy who brought an audience gift from Mannu-luyu, the ruler of ʿabete, received two male sheep, classed as a “(maintenance) allocation” (*piqittu*) (No. 70).⁴⁸

We also find regal charity recognising good or bad fortune. Two sheep were given to a woman “when her brother died” (No. 110; Donbaz 1976, 40), and No. 89 lists thirteen oxen “issued as gifts of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur” (*a-na ri-mu-a-te ša NtA ta-ad-nu*). They include an ox for a eunuch mauled by a lion, one to the concubine of Aššur-tabni-šuklil “when she was [rece]ived? ([*ma(-a)h*’]-*ru-tu-ú-ni*) before Ištar-of-Heaven for the palace”, another to Adad-bela-ušur “when a son emerged for his house” – presumably celebrating a birth – and one to a variety of individuals including Kilizayu the king’s son.

The Documentation

The impression given by this archive is predominantly one of informality. There are no rigid categories of document or inflexible rules, but we can detect some broadly prevalent practices.

Memoranda

The most frequent documentary style is the single memorandum, frequently concluded with the familiar phrase “written down so as not to forget” (*ana lā mašāē šaṭir*), emphasising that the tablet was an internal, unilateral document. They tend to record a single event or transaction, using the stative: “has been entrusted” (*paqid, paqdū, paqqudū(ni)*), “has been issued” (*tadin, tadnū, tadnā*), “has been slaughtered” (*epiš, epšu*) or “has been received” (*maḥir, mahrū*).⁴⁹ They are usually dated at the end of the text, by day, month and eponym year, but sometimes just the day; or the entire date is instead, or additionally, stated earlier in the text

⁴⁷ See Jakob 2003, 461–5 for this term.

⁴⁸ For such “maintenance allocations” made by the state to support dependants, employees and others, see on Tell Chuera (p. 282).

⁴⁹ Compare, in the Offerings Archive, e.g. p. 139.



Figure 4.12. Seal of Mutta from clay test piece VAT 9316 (photo: Opitz 1935–36, p. 49). © Barbara Feller/Helga Kosak.

(e.g. Nos. 69; 64). No. 48 lacks any date, while occasional notes lack a verb specifying the nature of the transaction (e.g. Nos. 98; 99), though they may still be dated. One good reason for regularly dating the memoranda is apparent in that identical transactions (i.e. the same number of the same animals to the same recipient) did take place on different dates – most obviously with the lions.⁵⁰

A formulation which recurs with slight variations in many of the texts runs: “(n animals) audience-gift which PN₁ presented to NtA, are entrusted to PN₂”,⁵¹ where PN₂, the person to whom the animals are allocated, is most frequently Mutta himself, but also quite often Šamaš-nuri the gardener. Such documents combine the first two “stages” (arrival and allocation, Pedersen’s I and II), but because all the incoming animals go to a single destination, they can function as a note of receipt as well as temporary allocation. These single primary records occasionally group more than one transaction, either on the same or separate days; in a few cases, as noted by Weidner (1935-6, 15⁹⁵, 96) and also Pedersen (1985, 34), the same initial transaction resurfaces on another tablet. For an example of this see No. 82, where we learn that of twenty animals supplied by the chief flock-master on the 18th of Kalmartu, one went “for the procedure of Gizaya” and the remaining nineteen were entrusted to Mutta, essentially covering stages I and II (arrival and allocation), while No. 75, which covers stage III (disbursal), records for the same day the issue of one sheep for the lions, and one other sheep for Gizaya’s procedure, giving the extra details already cited (pp. 193–4).

⁵⁰ No. 104, a note of twenty-one oxen brought as audience gifts by eight persons including a number of stewards, is very unusual in lacking not only a verb but also the date.

⁵¹ *nāmurtu ša PN₁ ana Ninurta-tukul-Aššur uqarribūni – ana PN₂ paqdū.*

Bilateral Documents and Sealing

As already mentioned, seal impressions on the tablets of this archive are few and far between. Perhaps the most unusual is the single rolling of a seal on an oval piece of clay, which with its rounded corners is not the right shape to have been formed into a tablet, and so is plainly intended to provide a sample of the seal impression.⁵² The design of the seal, much reproduced, shows an archer standing in a light two-wheeled chariot next to the driver, who holds the reins of a pair of horses advancing against ibex in a mountain landscape (Figure 4.12). This seal was also used on No. 51 (on the uninscribed reverse; Donbaz 1976, Pl. 25 A 2615), No. 52 (in the blank space on the reverse above the date; Opitz Abb. 3; Donbaz Pl. 25 A. 297; and No. 95 where it was rolled both in the blank space left above l. 1 at the top of the obverse (upside down), and on the edges (Opitz Abb. 2; Donbaz Pl. 25 A. 113). Opitz (1935-6, 51) proposed that this handsome seal was that of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur himself, attributing the apparent absence of a beard to his youth, but from what we know of Middle Assyrian sealing practice this cannot be right, because the person sealing does so to acknowledge an ongoing liability, and Ninurta-tukul-Aššur has no direct involvement in the transactions. In both No. 51 and No. 95 sheep are said to be “incumbent on” (*ina* UGU) Mutta, and in No. 52 also the sheep are entrusted (*paqdū*) to him. Pedersén must therefore be right to attribute the seal to Mutta (1985, 63-4), but now that the revised drawing of the impression clearly shows the archer as bearded, one cannot identify him as Mutta the seal owner and must presumably consider him a royal personage, whether the king or Ninurta-tukul-Aššur.⁵³ Likewise with the other sealed tablet, No. 66 (Donbaz Pl. 25 A. 295), the seal owner should be the person acknowledging receipt of (*maḥir*) the four sheep and one goat for the purification of Reminni, “the woman of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur”, that is “Riṣ-Marduk the exorcist” (MAŠ.MAŠ), rather than Reminni herself as proposed by Opitz.

It is hard to see why texts 66 and 52 should have been selected for sealing, when other very similar texts were not, and it seems that practices were not fully consistent. It may not be coincidental that text 52 (like 51) is among the earliest in the archive, still in the final month of the eponym year of Aššur-šezibanni. On the other hand, as pointed out by Pedersén, out of the whole archive only the sealed texts 51 and 95 are formulated to record an obligation “incumbent on” Mutta (or anyone else), the regular way to express an ongoing liability in bilateral documents. No. 51 is curiously laconic, giving, apart from the date, only the bald statement that “8 male sheep, audience-gift of Tamriya (are) incumbent on Mutta. Written down so as not to forget”. Why the usual formulation of “are entrusted (*paqdū*) to Mutta” was not used in this case we cannot reconstruct, but the combination of the sealing itself with the use of *ina muḥḥi* seems to confirm that the difference is not accidental.

⁵² Opitz 1935-6, 49.

⁵³ Contrary to my previous assumption that it could be Mutta himself, given that in No. 67:6 (Donbaz Pl. 22 A.3199) he is given the title *ša* SAG “eunuch”, which would have accounted for the lack of a beard (cf. Fischer 1999, 122 on Ušur-namkur-šarri, a eunuch with a seal showing a beardless figure).

Secondary Documentation

In the case of No. 95 the co-occurrence of the seal impressions and *ina muḫḫi* is clearly no coincidence. The tablet dates from quite late in the archive, and Pedersén has shown that the total of 914 *nāmurtu* sheep corresponds precisely to the numbers recorded in the individual tablets recovered, making it clear that this was an attempt to summarise the transactions between the 12th of Kalmartu (ix) and the 22nd of Ša-kenate (iii), and thereby to reach a statement of Mutta's liabilities over about half a year. His seal therefore acknowledges his recognition of the figures listed by the tablet, and his acceptance of responsibility for the 228 animals which had not yet been delivered to their ultimate destination, which would classify them as "expenditure" (*talpittu*). The brief comment "Puša ratified (*iktašar*)" agrees with other instances of this technical term where previous transactions are resumed in a fresh document, and because there are no reports of envelope fragments we may be right to conclude that No. 95 is not itself the *kiširtu* sealed by Puša, which may have ended up somewhere else.

There are other tablets in the archive which group transactions over a period of time. No. 50 is most similar to No. 95, totalling 32 sheep issued between the 11th of Ḫibur and the 28th of Šippu, about 47 days [*ana*] *ri-mu-a-te* *ù* *tal-pi-te*, "[for] gifts and expenditure(s)", but it is unsealed, and concludes with the phrase "written down [so as not to forget]". Others tacitly group a number of days' deliveries together, such as No. 26, dated to the 15th of Ša-kenate, but listing audience gifts received on the 11th, 13th, 14th and 15th. No. 40, written on the 18th of Qarratu, records the delivery of twenty sheep by Marduk-bela-ušur on the 17th, and then gives details of how they were distributed, including three to the orchard, single animals to several gates, three as sacrifices (*ni-qi-a-te*) to Marat-Anim, four (to) the animal fattener, and one "for the 19th day". The closing lines summarise this rather inaccurately as "20 sheep, audience-gift of Marduk-bela-ušur which Mutta entrusted to the work-house and the gates. Written down so as not to forget". No. 44 was written four days later but almost certainly deals with the same sheep. Here again, stages I and II are combined in a single document. Several others similarly state an arrival and then give a breakdown of how some at least of the animals were distributed: "from among them" (*ina libbišunu*, cf. No. 60). No. 7 ends with a breakdown of the expenditure of five animals which were "under the administrative responsibility of (*ša pi-ti*) Šamaš-nuri (the gardener)", as had been recorded earlier in the same text. Also close in time to No. 40 is No. 63 from 17th of Qarratu, which lists animals issued to the exorcists on the 14th and 17th of the month, and summarises the entries as "Total 11 sheep, including goats, the exorcists received for purification (and) purgation". This was also "written down so as not to forget", but it is hardly a primary record because at least two of the individual issues are already recorded in No. 59 from day 7 and No. 62 from day 15 of Qarratu.

Conclusion

In sum, although it appears that a fairly complete record was maintained of the receipt and disposal of animals, the administrative liabilities were hardly ever expressed in formal sealed

documents with the vocabulary of personal obligation, and, even when they were, they were still comparatively informal, being unwitnessed even though sealed. Although one could envisage a system in which every time animals were “allocated” the recipient was expected to seal a bilateral debt note, this plainly did not happen, because (as mentioned earlier) account tablet 95 incorporates the information on the unsealed memoranda which were found in the jar with it, and we can hardly suppose that there was also a set of sealed and differently formulated bilateral documents recording the identical transactions.

Nevertheless, there clearly was an intention to maintain a record of transactions – as the frequently recurring phrase *ana la mašāē šaṭir* reminds us, the information was written down to ensure it was remembered, and in some shape or form we do see within the archive that the primary information was used to compile further statements. We can hardly call these “accounts”, if only because the Assyrians themselves seem not to have done so, but they were the raw material from which occasionally an audit was created and the outstanding obligations of those involved determined.

Summary

Taken all together, this jarful of tablets is hugely revealing about the nature of life close to the Assyrian court. Given the find spot of the archive, just west of the Old Palace, it is tempting to wonder if Ninurta-tukul-Aššur adopted this as his seat of government, rather than the New Palace founded by Tukulti-Ninurta (which was perhaps reserved for the king).⁵⁴ Even though not himself the king, Ninurta-tukul-Aššur lived in royal state. From the list of those bringing audience gifts we can see that he was courted by the highest state officials controlling the cities and countryside across Assyria: by the provincial governors and the mayors of cities, and by the stewards of elite households, some of which probably had roles within government, as well as by representatives of neighbouring polities more or less subservient to Assyrian domination.

The jarful of tablets which seems to represent the scribal record of a year’s worth of Mutta’s activity gives a general impression of disorganisation. While a need was clearly felt to keep track of the animals as they passed through the establishment, this was done in a haphazard way with no consistency. To judge from the material at our disposal, it would have been a simple matter to arrange the information in the three categories as defined by Pedersén. Instead, the different stages are sometimes recorded separately and sometimes all mixed in together (as for example in No. 7).

Thus the indications are that there was an administrative environment within which unilateral documentation was deemed sufficient and there was little call for bilateral contracts, formal or informal. Nevertheless, Mutta (and the others to whom animals were allocated) remained accountable, as is evident from No. 95 in which his liabilities in respect of sheep are

⁵⁴ As Weidner notes (1935–6, 11), there were at the time at least four palaces: the Old Palace, Shalmaneser’s and Tukulti-Ninurta’s new palaces north-east of the ziqqurat (see Schwenzner 1932–3, 119; 1933–4, 44–5) and Tukulti-Ninurta’s New Palace in the north-west corner of the city.

summarised. The effective situation must have been that he was expected to provide evidence of his fulfilment of his responsibilities by supplying periodic accounts, even if this was not formally documented in writing as happened in other archives.

Despite inconsistencies of presentation, the records as kept are a coherent statement of the role of his organisation, and the enigma for us is to identify the wider context of this establishment within the government system: To whom was Mutta answerable? As mentioned previously, No. 95 may hint that Puṣa was higher up the administrative ladder, but we have no hint of his professional status (see pp. 181–2). There is no sign that Mutta's activities intersected in any way with those of the palace's (chief) steward. There is equally no obvious mention of any subordinate members of Mutta's administrative team, and in particular, no scribe is mentioned, a familiar silence. Equally obscure is Mutta's personal status in relation to his employers: as a eunuch, we may be right to assume that he was on the strength of the palace, and somehow received his sustenance that way, but there is nothing to tell us where he physically lived, and whether his remuneration came in kind, as daily rations or via some other arrangement (such as prebendary landholding). Nor is there any hint in the archive that any of the animals entrusted to him could be diverted to providing for his own sustenance, one conceivable mechanism.

4.4 | The Archive of Babu-aḫa-iddina

This next archive is almost as different from Mutta's as it is possible to imagine. To begin with it is not concerned with state affairs but with the personal business of an individual, albeit one very high in the social hierarchy. Then it does not cover just one year, but spans several decades, and accordingly it cannot have the same coherence and integrity as Mutta's jarful, but can only be expected to be a fragmentary and accidental assemblage of texts. What compensates for this in some measure is the unparalleled body of correspondence between the head of household and various members of his staff represented by texts Nos. 1–29 in [Table 4.11](#), which conveys a vivid and coherent picture of the economic activities and managerial style of an elite household.¹

Although his formal office is nowhere mentioned, Babu-aḫa-iddina was very highly placed in the Assyrian state at the end of Shalmaneser's reign and the beginning of Tukulti-Ninurta's. The archive here attributed to him was recovered by Andrae in two groups from the south-eastern corner of a building south of the Istar Temple (see [Figure 4.1](#), p. 87), lying above an intramural vaulted tomb (Gruft 45) which still housed a double inhumation accompanied by the richest grave furnishings known from Middle Assyrian Aššur. If, as has been suggested more than once, the occupants were in fact Babu-aḫa-iddina and a spouse, the family vault is likely to have been in a secluded part of the house, and it would make sense for business documents to be stored there, although the tablets recovered cannot by any means have been the family's most valuable archive, because this would surely at least have included legal documents related to the ownership of real estate and male and female slaves, and perhaps also marriage contracts. Instead they derive almost exclusively from the economic administration of the household and there are only two tablets which mention transactions connected with a land purchase away from Aššur.

What emerges from both the letters and the administrative documents is that the household was involved in a range of industrial activities, including textile production, leather working, carpentry (including the technically challenging manufacture of bows and chariots), stone working and metal working. It also produced perfumed oils, and handled luxury products such as wine and honey. Both raw materials and finished products were kept in stock: the main storerooms were for wool and textiles, which were mostly kept in wooden chests, but they also housed other items such as ivory or precious wood, and we hear of storage facilities dedicated to bark for bows, oil, aromatics, alum and bronze. The texts occasionally mention the individual specialists responsible for the manufacturing processes, such as a coppersmith, a bowyer and a stone carver; as in other archives, it is difficult to be sure whether they were

¹ For a recent discussion of the archive see Faist 2001, 98ff.

wholly in the employ of this one household or undertaking individual contracts, but at least some of the work of the stone worker and the bowyer was done under a work-assignment (iškāru) contract. The actual handiwork of textile and perfumed oil production was probably mostly carried out by women: in the early years there were several producing perfumes based in the inner courtyard, and weaving was done in a village or small town called Lemutti-Marduk, by women operating under a work-assignment system. Following the centuries-old mercantile tradition of the city of Aššur, some of their output was destined for export to Canaan in the west, and at least one of the merchants involved, called Siqi-ilani, operated for the household on a regular basis.

All this activity required organisation. Babu-aḫa-iddina's letters are frequently addressed to groups of two to four correspondents whose professions are not usually stated. No doubt one or more of them was a scribe, or at least competent to carry out scribal tasks, and one of them is elsewhere known to be a textile worker (kāšīru). Although there is no mention of a steward, it would be surprising if he did not exist, and the group must usually have included the house supervisor, whose title is occasionally given. Babu-aḫa-iddina evidently writes his letters from a distance, and we must assume he was away from the capital on state service or private business: his letters were often accompanied by one or more representatives (qēpūtu) who are listed in the letter and appointed to ensure that his instructions are correctly carried out. Of the nine persons listed in different letters as representatives, one is Siqi-ilani, the merchant, and in two cases they are textile workers, while four of them in all are also met among the addressees of other letters. Hence we get a glimpse of the small cadre of Babu-aḫa-iddina's immediate subordinates who were expected to keep the household going when he was away. The formality of nominating regular members of his staff as his representatives seems likely again to reflect ingrained commercial instincts, and this is also reflected in the elaborate procedures for sealing not only the storerooms but also the letters and consignments of goods (including seals) entrusted to some of the representatives.

Babu-aḫa-iddina and His Archive

Babu-aḫa-iddina² is known to have been an important figure at the end of the reign of Shalmaneser and the beginning of his successor's reign.³ He served as eponym, perhaps early in the reign of Shalmaneser,⁴ but his extreme importance emerges from correspondence between the Assyrian and Hittite states unearthed at the Hittite capital Ḫattusa, and was

² Alongside the expected writing of his name, ^{1,4}*ba-bu-ŠEŠ-SUM-na*, the archive also has instances where -aḫa-iddina is unexpectedly, but not uniquely, written -A-PAB (e.g. Nos. 22:21; 61:16; 80:3; MARV 8.58:7). On these writings see Pedersén 1999, and more recently Freydank 2003, 249⁵.

³ Weidner pointed out that his name, "Babu gave a brother", indicates that he was not an eldest son and wonders if he was a younger brother of Adad-nirari (1935–6, 34–5), but this must be discarded since (despite Weidner's assumption of a different man with the same name) his father was Ibašši-ilu, and his paternal grandfather Ili-pada (Nos. 31; 34; 36). The name Ili-pada may of itself hint at a connection with the royal family (cf. Cancik-Kirschbaum 1999b, 212).

⁴ A Babu-aḫa-iddina, presumably he, was father of the eponym Ina-pi-Aššur-lišlim, who is number 9 in Röllig's list and therefore held the office at least fifteen years before the end of Shalmaneser's reign, which would suggest that Babu-aḫa-iddina's own eponymate was close to if not earlier than Shalmaneser's accession.

described by Weidner (1959–60). On the death of Shalmaneser the Hittite king (Tuthaliya IV) addresses Babu-aḫa-iddina directly as the representative of the young Tukulti-Ninurta.⁵ Weidner followed Forrer and Ebeling in identifying him as Shalmaneser's chancellor ("Kanzler oder Großwesir"), for which the Assyrian would be *sukkallu rabiū*.⁶ There is still no explicit proof that Babu-aḫa-iddina held this office,⁷ but a rather convoluted line of argument presented by Jakob may favour it: MARV 1.39 is a letter from Babu-aḫa-iddina to the governor of Amasaki, and (as shown in Jakob 2003, 126) it is closely comparable to letters from Salmanu-muṣabši to the governors of Amimu, Ḫarbu and Saḫlala excavated at Tell Chuera.⁸ This Salmanu-muṣabši is known from Durkatlimmu as a Chief Chancellor (*sukkallu rabiū*; Jakob 2003, 57), and each official is writing to unnamed provincial governors who are their inferiors, to instruct them to issue commodities in connection with diplomatic missions.⁹

Whether or not Babu-aḫa-iddina held the office of *sukkallu (rabiū)*, he was beyond doubt an important personage at the time of Tukulti-Ninurta's succession from Shalmaneser.¹⁰ The tablets in Ass. 14410 and Ass. 14445¹¹ do not directly relate to any of his presumed activities as a high state official, but they do vividly illustrate the nature of his personal household at Aššur. Their provenance, from a house in dE7IV, south of the Ištar Temple, was discussed by Pedersén (1992), and further archaeological details have been made known by Miglus (1996).¹² Only a small portion of the building was encountered by the excavators in their trench, consisting of the south-east corner of a room (and perhaps of the building), within which was constructed a vaulted tomb (Gruft 45) oriented north-west–south-east with the entrance to the north-west. The tablets were found in two groups in fill above the level of the

⁵ See Otten 1959–60, 43.

⁶ Rather than *sukkalmahḫū* as suggested by Weidner (1956–7, 34).

⁷ Unless MARV 8.58:8 should be emended to read [LÜ.SUKKA]L GAL-i; but against this see Freydank 2012, 212–13, where the most recent attestations of his name and his possible lifespan are reviewed.

⁸ Now edited as Jakob 2009, Nos. 22–6. The most telling similarity is probably that the addressee in each case is not named, but merely identified as "the governor of X".

⁹ For the role of the Chief Chancellors in the 13th and 12th centuries, who in some instances also held the title of "King of Ḫanigalbat", see Jakob 2003, 59–63; p. 300.

¹⁰ Donbaz (1991, 73–5) suggests that he had a daughter, Ramat-Šalaya, who married Tukulti-Ninurta, making him the new king's father-in-law, and this suggestion is reported by Faist (2001, 98); however, if Ramat-Šalaya were his daughter, her father's name rather than that of her mother would surely be given, so this suggestion must remain *sub judice*. Cf. the doubts of Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, (151¹²⁴).

¹¹ Ass. 14410 and 14445 are grouped by Pedersén as his archive M11, and listed with brief publication details in Table. There is no published general account of the archive since Weidner's 1959–60 article, and in preparing my text I have benefitted greatly from Campo dell'Orto 2004, which has a full bibliography and discussion of the context and content of the texts. Most of the texts are edited in Freydank and Saporetti 1989 (though not KAV 111, 157 or KAJ 293a). Pedersén lists forty-two tablets or fragments known to him under Ass. 14410, all save one with VAT numbers of the Berlin Museum. Other pieces from this group went to Istanbul, some of which were published or excerpted by Donbaz after the appearance of Freydank and Saporetti's edition. From Ass. 14445 Pedersén reported eighteen tablets and ten fragments on the basis of the excavation records, of which fifteen pieces from Berlin were published. Copies published in MARV are: MARV 3.23 (VAT 9017 = No. 42); 3.64 (VAT 8863 = No. 4). Istanbul texts to be added were published or described with excerpts in Brinkman & Donbaz 1985, 78–83; Donbaz 1991; Donbaz 1997, 103–9. Stray pieces which must belong to one or other group have been published from Brussels and Manchester (included in Freydank & Saporetti 1989, 87–9), and one piece ended up in the British Museum (No. 64; Postgate & Collon 1999–2001, No. 1 BM 108965).

¹² Miglus 1996, 203–4 with Plan 30 (Aufnahmeplan and schematic section) and Plan 124b (schematic plan).

top of the vault, therefore perhaps at the floor level of the house. Ass. 14410 was found above the south-east end of the tomb structure, and Ass. 14445 about three metres away above the entrance shaft at the north-west end. The tomb itself was the most richly furnished Middle Assyrian grave at Aššur, and this has led Pedersén to the plausible assumption that the male skeleton in the grave is Babu-aḫa-iddina himself, presumably accompanied by his wife (1992, 169). Whether there is any special significance in the tablets' location directly above the tomb is doubtful. It is a reasonable assumption that the family vault would have been in the least public part of a house, and it follows that the room or rooms above it would also have been secluded and correspondingly secure. On the other hand, the contents of the archive are by no means the family's most valuable documents, which would have included house deeds and probably slave conveyances: we learn from one of the letters that real estate sale documents were stored in Babu-aḫa-iddina's own bedroom, presumably for maximum security.

Referring to both these groups of tablets as an "archive" of Babu-aḫa-iddina is understandable because he features prominently in many of them and it is certain that they are mainly concerned with the administration of his personal household. He is the creditor in a few of the debt-notes (Group C), which we would expect to have been stored in his personal possession, and he is himself the author of at least 20 letters (Group A). It might seem strange at first sight to find letters from him in his own house, but from their content it becomes clear that he is writing from elsewhere to give instructions on the administration of his household back home, and we may reasonably assume that these letters were saved in the household's back files. In the list which follows, the texts from the two contexts are treated together and divided into four groups: letters written by Babu-aḫa-iddina himself, letters from other correspondents, sealed bilateral documents and the largest group, consisting of unsealed memoranda and lists. The letters form a remarkably homogeneous group, dealing principally with the storage and treatment of textiles and other material commodities, and the remaining texts are also largely concerned with such goods. Within this chapter, so as to avoid frequent unwieldy citations, these texts are referred to by their number in the table.

The Correspondence

Undoubtedly the most revealing texts from this archive are the letters, both those from Babu-aḫa-iddina himself and those from some of his entourage. At the present count, the tablets from the archive are dated by or refer to 27 eponym years, of which only about 5 or 6 fall after the accession of Tukulti-Ninurta, so that the majority of the activities reflected here must fall in the reign of Shalmaneser.¹³ The earliest group of four letters (1–4), from the final month of

¹³ Note that texts 39–41 have Libur-zanin-Aššur as the creditor, and being dated coincidentally by his own eponymate, are among the latest in the archive. Libur-zanin-Aššur was a royal eunuch, and an important figure in the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta (see p. 29), but it is not known if there are family or other connections between the two men which would explain why his texts should have been found here. The recently published Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta tablet MARV 8.58 would, according to Freydank, date to Abi-ili, son of Katiri (MARV 8, p. 12), year 40 in Röllig's list, and thus be the latest attestation of Babu-aḫa-iddina.

Table 4.11. *Texts in the Babu-aḥa-iddina Archive*

Group I: Letters from Babu-aḥa-iddina ¹⁴					
No.	Publication	Ass.	Addressee(s)	Day.Month	Eponym
1	KAV 96	A	Šilli-Ea-šarri + Bel-libur	5.Ḫibur	Aššur-ereš [Adn]
2	KAV 107	A	Šilli-Ea-šarri + Bel-libur	5.Ḫibur	Aššur-ereš [Adn]
3	KAV 194	A	Bel-libur	5.Ḫibur	Aššur-ereš [Adn]
4	VAT 8863 (=MARV 3.64)	A	[-----]	20.Ḫibur	Aššur-ereš [Adn]
5	KAV 100	A	Kidin-Gula + Aššur-bel- šallim + Aššur-zuqpanni	17.Ša-sarrate	[-----]
6	KAV 98	A	Ma'nayu + [Kidin-Gula] + Aššur-bel-šallim + [Aššur- zuqpanni]	[x].Ša-sarrate	Usat-Marduk [20]
7	A. 1438+1559 Donbaz 1997, 103	A	Ma'nayu + Aššur-bel-šallim + Mušallim-Aššur + Adad-tura	29.[X]	Usat-Marduk [20]
8	KAV 103	A	Ma'nayu + Kidin-Gula + Aššur-bel-šallim + Aššur- zuqpanni	26.Sin	Enlil-ašared [21]
9	KAV 195 +203	A	Ma'nayu + Kidin-Gula + Aššur-zuqpanni + Aššur-bel- šallim	20.Ḫibur	Enlil-ašared [21]
10	KAV 205	A	Ma'nayu + Kidin-Gula + Aššur-zuqpanni + Aššur-bel- šallim	1.Ša-sarrate	Ittabši-den-Aššur [22]
11	KAV 99	A	Ma'nayu + Kidin-Gula + Aššur-zuqpanni+ Aššur-bel- šallim	1.Ḫibur	Ittabši-den-Aššur [22]
12	KAV 200	A	Aššur-bel-šallim + Aššur- zuqpanni	[x].Ḫibur	Ubru [23]
13	KAV 196	A	Aššur-zuqpanni	[x].Ḫibur.	Tukulti-Ninurta [24]
14	KAV 102	A	Aššur-bel-šallim + Aššur- zuqpanni	1.Sin.	Adad-bel-gabbe [27]
15	KAV 105	A	Mušallim-Aššur + Nabu- belu-da'iq	22'.Ša-sarrate	Adad-bel-gabbe [27]
16	KAV 109	A	Aššur-bel-šallim + Aššur- zuqpanni	23.Kalmartu	Šunu-qardu [28]
17	A. 1577 Donbaz 1997, 104	A	[PN] + Aššur-bel-šallim + [-----]	[-----]	[-----]
18	A. 2424 Donbaz 1997, 104	A	Aššur-bel-šallim + Aššur- zuqpanni	[x].Apu-šarrani	[-----]
19	A.778 Donbaz 1997, 103	A	Aššur-bel-šallim + Aššur- zuqpanni (?)	[-----]	[-----]
20	KAJ 5	C	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]

¹⁴ Another letter of which Babu-aḥa-iddina is author is Ass. 16308 l = MARV 1.39, the letter to a provincial governor already referred to. This clearly reflects his state function, and it was found in a secondary context within the confines of the Aššur Temple (iD3V), see Pedersén 1985, 56; 1992, 167³¹. For its seal impression see Freydank 1974c.

Group II: Letters from Others

No.	Publication	Author	Addressee	Day.Month	Eponym	
21	AfO 19 Taf. 5	A	Kidin-Gula	Aššur-taklak	15.Ša-kenate	Ber-šumu-lešir [10]
22	KAV 104	A	Mušallim-Aššur	Kidin-Gula	22.Sin	Usat-Marduk [20]
23	KAV 108	A	Mušallim-Aššur	Aššur-zuqpanni	[x].Muḫur-ilani	[-----]
24	KAV 106	A	Aššur-šallimanni	Aššur-bel-šallim	7.Kalmartu	Ubru [23]
25	A. 2704 Brinkman & Donbaz 78–83	B	Aššur-mušašri	Marat-ili	7.Allanatu	Ubru [23]
26	MCS 2.14 2	C	Nabu-bel-da’iq	Aššur-bel-šallim + Aššur-zuqpanni	9.Ḫibur	Tukulti-Ninurta [24]
27	A. 2705 Donbaz 1991	B	Mušallimat-Ištar	Babu-aḫa-iddina	[-----]	[-----]
28	A. 2714 Donbaz 1997, 105	A	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]
29	A. 1734 Donbaz 1997, 104	A (Envelope fragment)	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]	[-----]

Group III: Bilateral Documents

No.	Publication	Creditor	Debtor	Item	Day.Month	Eponym
30	KAJ 253	A	[...]ia	[...]ia	Grain, horse fodder	23.Ḫibur Kidin-ilani [Adn]
31	KAJ 158	B	Kurbanu + Nabu-kettu	Babu-aḫa-iddina	Lead, field price	24 [?] . [-----] Aššur-mušabši s. Anu-mušallim [4]
32	RIAA 311	C	ŠU Kidin-Gula	Šamaš-tapputi	Grindstones	15.Šippu Mušallim-Aššur [6]
33	RIAA 314	C	ŠU Kidin-Gula	Ma'nayu	uncertain	15.Apu-šarrani Ber-šumu-lešir [10]
34	KAJ 123	B	Babu-aḫa-iddina ŠU Kidin-Gula	Ma'nayu	Grindstones	1.Ša-kenate Aššur-dammeq [11]
35	A. 2707 Donbaz 1997, 108	B	Babu-aḫa-iddina ŠU Kidin-Gula	[-----]	uncertain	[-----] [-----]
36	KAJ 159	B	Babu-aḫa-iddina	Nabu-kettu	Lead, field price	19.Ša-kenate Ekaltayu s. Abi-ili [16]
37	KAJ 125	A	Babu-aḫa-iddina ŠU Aššur-zuqpanni	Aššur-mušabši	Fine sieves	3.Belat-ekalli Usat-Marduk [20]

No.	Publication	Creditor	Debtor	Item	Day.Month	Eponym
38	A. 1598 Donbaz 1997, 107	B Kidin-Gula?	Babu-aḫa-iddina	Textiles	17.[X]	Usat-Marduk [20]
39	KAJ 218	B Libur-zanin-Aššur ŠU Ubru	Kidinniya, bird-feeder	Grain, bird fodder	14.Belat-ekalli	Libur-zanin-Aššur [29]
40	KAJ 318	B Libur-zanin-Aššur ŠU Ubru	Zer-ketta-lešir, <i>alahḫinu</i>	Grain, to be ground	14.Belat-ekalli	Libur-zanin-Aššur [29]
41	A. 2421 Donbaz 1997, 108	B Libur-zanin-Aššur ŠU Aššur-zuqpani	not known	uncertain	12.Muḫur-ilani	Libur-zanin-Aššur [29]

Group IV: Unsealed Memoranda and Lists

No.	Publication	Issuer	Recipient	Item	Day.Month	Eponym
42	AfO 19 Taf. 7.2 = MARV 3.23	A Ma'nayu	[-----]	Wine	8.Kuzallu	Ninurta-emuqaya [Adn]
43	KAV 110	A not stated	Various	Wine	28.Kuzallu	Ninurta-emuqaya [Adn]
44	KAV 158	A not stated	Various	Wine	5.Allanatu	Ninurta-emuqaya [Adn]
45	KAV 157	A not stated	[-----]	Wine	14 ⁹ .Allanatu	Ninurta-emuqaya [Adn]
46	KAV 111	A not stated	Ceremony	Wine	19.Allanatu	Ninurta-emuqaya [Adn]
47	KAJ 290	B not stated	Tukulti-Ninurta	Wine	7.Muḫur-ilani	Abi-ili [Slm]
48	KAJ 242	A Babu-aḫa-iddina	Nabu-bela-ušur	Wax	18.Muḫur-ilani	Abi-ili [s.] Aššur-šumu-lešer [Slm]
49	A. 1571+1590 Donbaz 1997, 106	B	Siqi-ilani?	Tin	23.Kuzallu	Qibi-Aššur s. Šamaš-aḫa-iddina [5]
50	A. 1720 Donbaz 1997, 107	B	Ma'nayu	Wool for merchant	25.Kalmartu	Mušallim-Aššur [6]
51	KAJ 274	B not stated	<i>bēt qāte</i>	Metals	21[+x].Kuzallu	Ina-pi-Aššur-lišlim [9]
52	KAJ 317	A		Foodstuffs?	4. Sin	Aššur-dammeq [11]
53	KAJ 217	B not stated	Ma'nayu Adad-šar-niše	Glue	20.Šippu	Ber-bel-lite [12]

(continued)

Group IV (*cont.*)

No.	Publication	Issuer	Recipient	Item	Day.Month	Eponym
54	A. 1595 Donbaz 1997, 106	B	[-----]	[-----]	[x].Sin	Ber-bel-lite [12]
55	A. 2423 Donbaz 1997, 106	B	Babu-aḥa-iddina	Ivory + ebony		(Ber-bel-lite [12])
56	A. 1584+1732 Donbaz 1997, 106	B	Šamaš-apla-ereš, carpenter Ma'nayu	Glue	29.Ḫibur	Lullayu [14]
57	KAJ 223	A	not stated	Balṭu-kašid Sin-šallimanni	29.Ḫibur	Lullayu [14]
58	A. 789 Donbaz 1997, 106–7	B	[-----]	[-----]	21.Qarratu	Aššur-daissunu [17]
59	KAJ 124	B	not stated	Balṭu-kašid Urad-Ea-šarri	29.Kalmartu	Aššur-daissunu [17]
60	A. 1722 Donbaz 1991	C	not stated	Tukulti-Ninurta Ramat-Šalaya	26.Apu-šarrani	Nabu-bela-ušur [19]
61	Iraq 35, 13–14	C	not stated	Various	4.Sin	Usat-Marduk [20]
62	AfO 19 Taf.7. 1	A	not stated	Siqi-ilani	12.Ša-sarrate	Usat-Marduk [20]
63	A. 70 Donbaz 1991	C	not stated	Siqi-ilani	12.Ša-sarrate	Usat-Marduk [20]
64	Postgate & Collon 1999–2001, No. 1	C	not stated	Siqi-ilani	12.Ša-sarrate	Usat-Marduk [20]
65	KAJ 279	B	not stated	(uncertain)	19.Kalmartu	Ittabši-den-Aššur [22]
66	AfO 19 Taf. 6	A	not stated	Kidin-Gula Aššur-zuqpanni uncertain	[x].Ḫibur	Ittabši-den-Aššur [22]
67	A. 1587 Donbaz 1997, 104	A		Garments	[-----]	Ittabši-den-Aššur [22]
68	KAJ 138	A	[-----]	[-----]	29.Ḫibur	Tukulti-Ninurta [24]
69	A. 2706 Donbaz 1997, 108	B	[-----]	Objects	[x.]Kal[martu]	[Adad]-bel-gabbe [27]
70	A. 307 Donbaz 1997, 105	A	no details	Wooden items	14.Kalmartu	Šunu-qardu [28]

No.	Publication	Issuer	Recipient	Item	Day.Month	Eponym	
71	KAJ 178	B	not stated	Aššur-zuqpanni	Copper Emery	20.Sin	Šunu-qardu [28]
72	A. 1578 Donbaz 1997, 107	B		[...]	[...]	-.Qarratu	Ušur-namkur-šarri [37]
73	A. 1774 Donbaz 1997, 107	B		[...]	[...]	29.[...]tu	Pa’uzu s. Erib-Aššur
74	A. 2422 Donbaz 1997, 108	B		[-----]	List of objects	10.Muḫur-ilani	Ištu-Adad-g[abbe]
75	A. 2425 Donbaz 1997, 105	A		[-----]	Wine	[-----]	[-----]
76	KAJ 252	A		Aššur-taklak	Wine	(no date)	(no date)
77	KAJ 226	A	not stated	not stated	Honey et al.	(no date)	(no date)
78	KAJ 277	A	[-----]	[-----]	Foodstuffs	[-----]	[-----]
79	KAJ 231	A	[-----]	[-----]	Textiles	(no date)	(no date)
80	KAJ 256	A	not stated	not stated	Textiles	(no date)	(no date)
81	KAJ 303	B	not stated	not stated	Vessels	(no date)	(no date)
82	KAJ 220	B	not stated	Nuskuya	Grain	(no date)	(no date)
83	KAJ 304	B	not stated	not stated	Aromatic	(no date)	(no date)
84	KAJ 305	B	not stated	not stated	Aromatic	(no date)	(no date)
85	A. 1682, Donbaz 1997, 107	B		[-----]	Sheep, ox	[-----]	[-----]
86	KAJ 293a	C	Various	Various	Wool	(no date)	(no date)
87	KAJ 136	C	[-----]	[-----]	Textiles & leather items	[-----]	[-----]

Notes to the Tables

For the sake of completeness, and to emphasise that some texts belonging to the archive remain unedited in Istanbul, these tables include Aššur tablets mentioned in Donbaz (1997). Inevitably the full details of these cannot be included, but where the author of a letter or the date of a text is known it seems worthy of inclusion. For the excavation numbers, see Pedersén 1985, archive M11, with extra details in Donbaz (1997). In the third column of the Tables, A stands for Ass. 14410, B for Ass. 14445 and C for other or unknown Ass. numbers. Within each group, the texts are arranged as far as possible from the earliest to the latest, with undatable texts at the end, but in a few cases an undatable text has been slotted in next to the most similar dated text. Most eponyms feature in the list drawn up in Röllig (2008, 4), and the numbers after the names, for example [20] refer to Röllig's numbering (given here in Appendix 2). This is the best currently available, but it must be expected that some eponyms are missing within the sequence, and some may be in the wrong position. There may be no eponyms in the archive later than Röllig's list; earlier names, or names he does not include, are given the assignation to king suggested in Freydank (1991d) (i.e. Adn for Adad-nirari and Slm for Shalmaneser). Small fragments which cannot be definitely assigned to one group or the other are also included in Group IV.

the eponymate of Aššur-eriš in the reign of Adad-nirari, are mainly concerned with the misdemeanours of a certain Sareni, but they show Babu-aḥa-iddina writing from outside Aššur to more than one correspondent required to carry out his instructions for the household. As observed by Freydank (1991d, 54), this episode must have been significantly earlier than the majority of the correspondence in Group I, which seems to fall in the decade approximately spanning the end of Shalmaneser's and the beginning of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign, when Babu-aḥa-iddina was very highly placed in the affairs of state. Text 6 may serve as a typical example of the letters he wrote during these years.

Text No. 6 (KAV 98)

a-na ^{1.d}*ma-a'-na-ie*-[*e* ¹*ki-din-dgu-la*]
^{1.d}*a-šur*-EN-šal-lim ¹*u*¹ [^{1.d}*a-šur-zu-qup-pa-ni*]
qī-bi-[*ma*]
um-ma ^{1.d}*ba-bu-ŠEŠ-SU*[*M-na-ma*]
¹*mu-šal-lim*-^d*a-šur* ¹EN-[*l**e-ṭe-e*[*r*]
^{1.d}*na-bi-um*-EN-[SIG₅] ¹*u* ¹*si-q*[*i*-DINGIR.MEŠ-*ni*]
¹*u*¹*qe-pu-tu-ia* ¹NA₄.KIŠIB-*ki*
ša pi-i ¹*É na-kám-a-te* ¹*u* NA₄.KIŠ[IB-*k*]*i-ma*
ša [*l*]*a-aḥ-mi* *ša pi-i* ¹*ṣi-tup-ni-na-te*
na-aṣ-su *i-lu-ku-ni-ku-nu*
iš-tu a-ḥa-iš *i-zi-za* ¹*É na-kám-ta*
pi-ti-a ¹*ṣi-tup-ni-na-te* ¹*še-ši-a-n*[*i*]
a-na pa-ni-šu-nu ¹*šu-uk-na*
lu-bu-ul-ta lu *ša lib-bi* ¹*ṣi-tup-ni-na-te*
ša NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-*ia*
¹*u lu i+na lu-bu-ul-te* *ša* ¹*a-ḥu*-DÜG.GA
LÚ.DAM.GĀR ¹*u-ta-e-ra-ni*
am-mar i-na-ši-ú-ni-ni
li-ši-ú-ni a-na lib-be *mi-im-ma*
ta-e-ra NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-*ku-nu*
ku-un-ka ¹*še-bi-la-ni*
lu-bu-ul-ta am-mar ¹*u-še-lu-ni*
ka-ni-ka-te ¹*šu-uṭ-ra*
a-na lib-be ¹*ṣi-tup-ni-na-te*
¹*ši-il-a*
¹*É na-kám-ta pi-ti-a*
20 MA.NA *kal-gu-qa*
20 MA.NA *k[a-l]ak-ku-ta*
¹*še-ši-a-ni* ¹*É IÀ <p>i-ti-a* 1 DUG.ŠAB

To Ma'nayu, [Kidin-Gula],
Aššur-bel-šallim, and [Aššur-zuquppanni]¹⁵
say:
Thus Babu-aḥa-iddina:
Mušallim-Aššur, Bel-leṭer,
Nabu-belu-[da'iq], and Siq[i-ilani],
my representatives, bearing
my seal for the storerooms, and my (other)
seal with the *laḥmu*¹⁶ for the chests,
are coming to you.
Stand together, open the storeroom
(and) bring out the chests
(and) put (them) before them.
Let them take clothing either from
inside the chests with my seals,
or from the clothing which Aḥu-ṭab,
the merchant, consigned,
as much as they want to take.
Pack them up(?),
seal them (with) your seals
(and) send them to me.
Write (on) sealed tablets the clothing
as much as they remove,
(and) deposit (the tablets) inside the chests.

Open the storeroom, (and) bring out
20 minas of *kalguqu*,¹⁷
(and) 20 minas of *kalakkutu*.
Open the oil-house¹⁸ (and) bring out

¹⁵ These names restored by comparison with texts 8–11.

¹⁶ The *laḥmu* is a mythical being which features in Mesopotamian glyptic; see Figure 21.

¹⁷ *Kalguqu* and *kalakkutu* are probably both minerals, etymologically borrowed from Sumerian and associated with *kalû* (CAD K 95a); see p. 217.

¹⁸ Freydank and Saporetti (1989) read here ¹*É ni-me-ti-a*, but the emendation to ¹*É IÀ <p>i-ti-a* is virtually certain by comparison with line 31 ¹*É ŠIM.MEŠ pi-ti-a*, and because a first person genitive suffix would normally be written *-ia*, not *-a*. For another "oil house" compare the "granary adjacent to the oil house" at Durkatlimmu (¹*É karme ša ṭiḥi* ¹*É* (*ša*) IÀ Röllig 2008, Nos. 76:21 and 77:16).

ša ia-ar-zi-ib-ni pa-ni ta-ú-ri
 še-ši-a-ni Ê.ŠIM.MEŠ pi-ti-a
 [() 5]-BÁN em-di še-ši-a-ni
 [] NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ku-nu
 ku-un-ka še-bi-la-ni-šu-nu
 a-na UGU-ia-ma lu-ub-lu-ni
^{gš}tup-ni-na-te ù Ê na-kám-a-te
 NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ia ku-un-ka
 NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ia NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ku-nu
 ku-un-ka še-bi-la-ni
 tup-pu-ku-nu šu-uṭ-ra ma-a a-ku-ki-a
 lu-bu-ul-ta i+na ŠA ^{gš}tup-ni-na-te
 a-ku-ki-a i+na ŠA GIŠ.GÀR la-a maḥ-ri
 a-ku-ki-a i+na ŠA lu-bu-ul-t[e]
 ša ¹a-ḥu-DÜG.GA ú-ta-e-ra-ni
 it-ta-šu še-bi-la-n[i]
^{gš}tup-ni-na ša GIŠ.BAN.M[ÊŠ pi-ti-a]
 1 GIŠ.¹BAN¹ še-ši-[a-ni]
 še-bi-la-ni ku-[un-ka ()]]
 ITI ša sa-ra-t[e UD.X.KÁM li-mu]
¹ú-sa-a[t-^dAMAR.UTU]

1 bowl of previously stored *iarzibnu*.¹⁹
 Open the aromatics house
 (and) bring out 5 *sūtu* of sedge tuber,²⁰
 with your seals seal (them)
 (and) send them to me –
 let them bring them to me personally.
 Seal the chests and the storerooms
 with my seals.
 Seal my seals with your seals
 (and) send (them) to me.
 Write your tablet saying “This much
 clothing inside the chests, this much
 from the unreceived work-assignment,
 this much from the clothing
 which Aḥu-ṭab consigned, they have taken”
 (and) send (the tablet) to me.
 [Open] the chest of bows
 (and) bring out one bow,
 send (it) to me (and) se[al (it)?].
 Month of Ša-sarrate, [xth day,
 eponymate of] Usa[t-Marduk].

The first question to confront here is why Babu-aḥa-iddina needed to write at all: evidently because he was not himself present. Although one could envisage a situation in which he might have sent complicated written instructions from another part of the city of Aššur to his household, this can hardly have occurred so regularly over a long period, and we must conclude that he had recurrent business in some other part or parts of the country. While one might consider the idea that he was travelling across Assyrian territory on royal business or even in the company of the king, without any specific geographical focus, there are two major cities referred to within the archive which witnessed activities of members of his household: Arbail and Kilizu. Text 71 is a memorandum from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta (eponym Šunu-qardu [28]) about copper, one ingot of which “was carried with Babu-aḥa-iddina to Arbail”. Text 62 informs us that four familiar members of Babu-aḥa-iddina’s entourage, led by Mušallim-Aššur, had transported textiles to Arbail. This is about 8 years earlier, from the eponymate of Usat-Marduk, near the end of Shalmaneser’s reign. Kilizu, the capital of the province neighbouring Arbail to the south, is mentioned a year or two earlier in text 60, in which five coloured garments have been issued to Ramat-Šalaya “when the clothing of the chest(s) of the town of Kilizu was removed”. This certainly seems to imply that Babu-aḥa-iddina had an establishment there. Kilizu also features in text 2, from the reign of Adad-nirari: the addressees are instructed urgently to send a dependant of the envoy of a foreign king to Kilizu, where he is to be handed over to Ṭab-palaḥ-ili. Unfortunately, this does

¹⁹ *Iarzibnu* is one of a number of words composed with *iar-* (or *ayar-*) which describe aromatics used in the manufacture of perfumed oils (see CAD I/J, 325–6).

²⁰ For the problem of how to read the plant product written *em-du* or *em-di* (*emdu* or *suādu*?) cf. Borger 2003, 287 under 164 and CAD S, 338–9, where the meaning is given as “(an aromatic plant, probably *Cyperus esculentus*)”.

not tell us if Babu-aḥa-iddina is at Kilizu himself. Another possible connection with Kilizu is hinted at by text 31, where one and perhaps both of the landowners from whom Babu-aḥa-iddina has arranged to buy a large tract of land (340 *iku* in No. 36) are called “Kilizaeen” (*uru-ki-li-za-ie-e*). This transaction is also relatively early, and contributes to the suspicion that Babu-aḥa-iddina may have had long-standing connections with this part of Assyria. What remains unclear is whether these connections are purely private, in the sense that this was his family background, or also, or rather, reflect an administrative role exercised on behalf of the state. One could easily imagine that he might have acted, in the early stage of his career, as a provincial governor in one or both of the cities of Arbail and Kilizu, but this would be pure speculation at present.

The existence of a number of letters in Group B, written by members of Babu-aḥa-iddina’s staff to other members based at the Aššur house, indicates that some section of his personal establishment moved with him when he was away from the city. Thus Mušallim-Aššur, one of those receiving letters from Babu-aḥa-iddina in texts 7 and 15, himself wrote to the house supervisors Kidin-Gula and Aššur-zuqpanni in Nos. 22 and 23, while Nabu-bel-ūda’iq, the other addressee of No. 15 along with Mušallim-Aššur, is the author of No. 26, in which he writes: “I am writing to you on the orders of Babu-aḥa-iddina.” It is hardly coincidental that they are both well attested as a representative (*qēpu*) in other letters (see p. 215).

The House(s)

Unfortunately, the remainder of the building to which Gruft 45, and the room above it from which Ass. 14410 was recovered, belonged has been lost to erosion and nothing is known of it.²¹ However, there are occasional references within the texts to the household itself and some of its architectural components. In texts 10 and 12, Babu-aḥa-iddina requests that his correspondents should take the bladder of oil for his anointment (*ellapuḥa ša šamni ša napšušiya*) and “give it to the house for (them) to heat it” (*a-na É di-na lu-ḥa-mi-tu* – 10:15 and 12 rev. 12). In text 14, his delegates are required to go into his bedroom (*a-na É ma-ia-li-ia le-ru-bu*), and take out from there the legal documents relating to Abu-ṭab’s house “which are deposited in my bedroom”, so that it seems clear that the premises where his correspondents operated did include his genuine residence. In the earliest of the letters (No. 1), Babu-aḥa-iddina orders that Sareni (the oil refiner) should not be allowed out into the outer courtyard (*a-na tar-ba-ši ša ki-da-nu*), and also refers to a *bēt šaḥūri*, whose precise nature remains uncertain, and to another part of the house written É NI[...], which is probably the “oil house”.²² Mostly his later letters refer to storage space: there are more than one “storerooms”

²¹ See Pedersén 1992, 165–6. See also Miglus 1996, 203–4.

²² This passage is restored É *ni-[me-ti]* by Freydank and Saporetti (1989), no doubt by comparison with KAV 98 (=No. 6):29, but see note to that line, p. 210.

(*nakkamāte*,²³ Nos. 6:8, 36; 5:10, 31); one of them is described as “the courtyard store-room” (*nakkamte ša kisalli*, No. 71:5–6), from which copper and emery are “brought down” (*šērudāni*), suggesting it may have been in an upper storey. Within or alongside the store-room there may have been a “chest room” (*bēt tupnināte*, Nos. 9:14; 11:12; 5:13; 16:11), which was also regularly sealed like the main storerooms, but several times chests are simply mentioned as the contents of a storeroom (e.g. No. 15). Separate rooms (or perhaps in some cases, merely containers) are identified by their contents: the “oil house” (*bēt šamni* Nos. 1:9; 6:29), the “spice house” (*bēt riqqē* No. 6:31), the “bark house” (*bēt sehpi* No. 5:19), the “alum house” (É^{na4} *ab-[na-ga]-bi-e* No. 16:19)²⁴ and the “bronze house” (É ZABAR No. 61:17). When a varied collection of copper vessels was returned from the palace in No. 81, they were deposited “in the granary which is above the house opposite” (*i-na É ḥa-ši-mi ša SAG É e-bir₅-ti*).²⁵ There is nothing to tell us whether these various storage facilities were all in a single residential complex: it seems just as likely that some were in separate buildings, but the impression we get from both the correspondence and the administrative documents is that they all belonged to Babu-aḥa-iddina’s extensive private establishment.²⁶

The Staff

It is unsurprising that Babu-aḥa-iddina employed a number of staff to manage this establishment. Not many professional designations are recorded in these letters, but the recurrence of their personal names makes it clear that certain men were regularly engaged in his employ. His letters are usually addressed to more than one person, several times to as many as four. Their names are shown in Table 4.12, together with their position in the sequence of names.

The letters are listed chronologically as far as possible, and we can see that in the reign of Adad-nirari (texts 1–3) his two correspondents were Šilli-Ea-šarri and Bel-libur, who do not occur in the later texts. The principal recipient (i.e. first addressee) of his letters in texts 6–11 (eponym years 20–2) is Maṇayu, often along with two or three other men. These include Kidin-Gula, who himself appears as principal recipient in No. 5, and Aššur-bel-šallim, who is the most regular member, being listed nine times, and features as principal recipient in

²³ That we should take the É usually written before forms of the word *nakkamtu* as a determinative, and not transliterate *bēt nakkamti*, appears to follow from the form É *na-kám-ta*, found twice for example in letter No. 6; cf. also Llop in Faist and Llop (2012, 24).

²⁴ The text has here É NA₄ *ab-[na-ga]-bi-e ša* NA₄. Freydank and Saporette treat the phrase *ša abni* as erroneous, but it may be that we should translate “open the alum-container (made) of stone”.

²⁵ Whether his premises also included space for the manufacturing activities attested is much less clear. If they did, it may have been in a workshop known as a *bēt qāti*, mentioned in a couple of texts. For É *qa-te* see KAJ 274, Freydank & Saporette 1989, 81; Donbaz 1997, 107–9.

²⁶ Archaeologically only one room of the house in trench dE7IV was excavated, because this Suchgraben was located in the unfulfilled hope of finding a continuation of a monumental plan encountered further south in the 8I Suchgraben. Given that Babu-aḥa-iddina’s establishment must have been quite extensive, with at least two courtyards, it is worth wondering whether this palace-like building (“Reste eines oder mehrerer großer, offenbar nicht privater Gebäude”) was in fact Babu-aḥa-iddina’s main house, commensurate with his exalted status (with the family vault in an adjacent smaller, original house to the north); see Miglus 1996, 215–16 on house d8:13. This was indeed proposed by Weidner (1959–60, 35).

Table 4.12. *Recipients of letters from Babu-aḥa-iddina*

Text No.	1	2	3	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	14	15	16
Year	Adn	Adn	Adn	[-]	20	20	21	21	22	22	23	27	27	28
Šilli-Ea-šarri	1	1												
Bel-libur	2	2	1											
Ma'nayu					1	1	1	1	1	1				
Aššur-bel-šallim				2	2	2	3	4	4	4	1	1		1
Kidin-Gula				1			2	2	2	2				
Aššur-zuqpanni				3			4	3	3	3	2	2		2
Mušallim-Aššur						3							1	
Adad-tura						4								
Nabu-bel-da'iq													2	

the following years (23–8, in Nos. 12, 14 and 16). Aššur-zuq(qu)panni is listed eight times, without ever being the principal recipient. Finally Mušallim-Aššur and Nabu-bel-da'iq, the addressees of No. 15, are well attested in a different role, that of the representative (*qēpu*).

During his absences from the house Babu-aḥa-iddina not only sent detailed instructions to his household staff, but also frequently sent a panel of representatives to accompany the written orders and see that they were carried out. They are normally explicitly designated as *qēpūtu*, a term also used for persons entrusted by the king with his orders.²⁷ There seems little doubt that Babu-aḥa-iddina's consistent inclusion of the designation *qēpūtu* reflects the need to ensure that the recipients of the letter recognised the authority delegated to the representatives to act on his behalf. The groups of representatives mentioned in the letters and two memoranda are shown in Table 4.13.

It emerges that Mušallim-Aššur appears on each of the eight occasions, and is regularly listed first, except in text 12 where Ma'nayu (who is more often the recipient of letters) is listed before him. Unfortunately professions or titles are not given in the list of addressees, and only rarely elsewhere, but this suggests that Mušallim-Aššur was Babu-aḥa-iddina's principal representative throughout this period, without giving any hint of his formal status. Aššur-šallimanni is once mentioned before him, as first author, and once after him, so may have been of similar standing; this is in agreement with text 86, where quantities of wool are issued “on the orders of (*i+na a-bat*) Aššur-šallimanni”, a phrase which otherwise is used only of Babu-aḥa-iddina himself. Bel-leṭer is twice the second *qēpu* named, and Nabu-bel-da'iq, who also features in all eight texts, was probably a junior member of the group to judge from his appearance often in third or fourth place. The last three names in the table feature only once each in the list of representatives, but they are known from elsewhere: Siqi-ilani is a merchant who receives textiles from the household on other occasions, and Adad-tura is mentioned in Nos. 12 and 16 as a textile worker (*kāšīru*) accompanying the representatives,

²⁷ As for example the royal representatives entrusted with the job of ensuring that rations were issued to deportees (archive of Urad-Šerua), or administering royal estates at Durkatlimmu.

Table 4.13. *Representatives named by Babu-aḥa-iddina, showing position in the list*

Text No.	5	6	62*	9	10	66	12	16
Year	[---]	20	20	21	22	22	23	28
Mušallim-Aššur	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1
Aššur-šallimanni					1	2		
Ma'nayu						3	1	
Nabu-belū-da'iq	3	3	3	2	3	4	3	2
Innamar-den-ili							4	3
Bel-leṭer	2	2	2					
Siqi-ilani		4						
Ešar-den-Nusku				3				
Adad-tura			4					

* The four men who are to carry out Babu-aḥa-iddina's orders in No. 62 are listed without the designation of *qēpūtu*, but the first three are attested in the letters as representatives, and surely acting in that capacity here; in a memorandum there was not the same need to specify their authority.

while both he and Ešar-den-Nusku, also a *kāšīru*, are mentioned as accompanying them in No. 11.²⁸ No doubt their presence in all cases was because of their specialist expertise.

There is a little evidence for the positions held by some of the addressees in Table 4.12. Kidin-Gula and (probably after him) Aššur-zuqpanni both held the post of house supervisor (*ša UGU Ê*).²⁹ The variety of activities they engage in agrees well with this title. What title the other addressees may have held remains uncertain. This is particularly frustrating in the case of Ma'nayu, given his evident seniority as the principal recipient in six of Babu-aḥa-iddina's letters. He is found as a witness to the land transaction No. 36, from which we learn that he lacks a father, his mother Ga(n)giya being named as his parent, as also in No. 34. Then he is issued with grindstones (No. 34), and amounts of glue (Nos. 53, 56), has 1 talent 20 minas of tin (AN.NA BABBAR) collected (*ušaddinūni* No. 51) and opens and distributes wine (No. 42). These are all in the "early years" before year 20, eponymate of Usat-Marduk, when he first appears as the principal recipient of letters from Babu-aḥa-iddina. In the 10th year, when document No. 34 was drawn up, he received two grindstones from Kidin-Gula, who was perhaps house supervisor at the time, but it seems possible that he had succeeded Kidin-Gula in this post by year 20 (Usat-Marduk). This would be consistent with his roles in No. 10:23–5, where he and Aššur-bel-šallim jointly oversee the smith's copper casting, and in No. 14, where he and Mušallim-Aššur are jointly to enter Babu-aḥa-iddina's bedroom in search of house title deeds, but Ma'nayu alone, presumably as the Aššur resident, is to take possession of the tablets. Whether or not he formally held the title of *ša muḥḥi bēti* like Kidin-Gula and Aššur-zuqpanni, the correspondence indicates that he had overall responsibility for the

²⁸ See p. 222.

²⁹ Kidin-Gula No. 34:7 (year 11); Aššur-zuqpanni No. 71:21 (year 28). Kidin-Gula also seems to have the unclear title of *ša GAL Ê-te* in No. 32:4, but this really needs collation.

management of the household in the years between the attested tenure of that post by Kidin-Gula (in year 11) and Aššur-zuqpanni (year 28).

The Commodities

Before looking more closely at the activities of the household staff, it will be helpful to see what they were administering. The various commodities mentioned in the archive are mostly food and drink, equipment and textiles. A group of five short memoranda (Nos. 42–6) records relatively small amounts of wine issued for cultic purposes in Adad-nirari's reign, and the only other mention of wine is the 10 litres of “sweet white wine of Niraškun given on the 7th day to Tukulti-Ninurta the Crown Prince” in No. 48. Beer is not mentioned in these texts, and ordinary foodstuffs only rarely: No. 77 is a list of honey issued mainly for cultic purposes, followed by flour, other cereal products, hulled sesame and a spice, and No. 78 is a badly damaged list of similar foodstuffs, some measured in bowls or sacks (*naruqqu*). These are probably mostly the everyday supplies destined for the household's internal consumption. Spices or aromatics are mentioned in No. 6 (*iarzibni*), in texts 83 and 84 (both recording amounts of sedge tubers³⁰) and in text 61, where the final section lists a container (^{duš}*kukkubu*) of juniper seed oil (*IĀ ša kirkiriāni*). “Sweet aromatics” (GIŠ.ŠIM DÜG.GA.MEŠ) are mentioned in the second half of Babu-aḥa-iddina's early letter 4, where they are evidently for use by Sareni, who is training women in the art of perfuming oil. Babu-aḥa-iddina himself was personally interested in “oil for anointing myself” (*IĀ ša napšušiya*), which was kept in a large bladder (*ellapuḥu*, Nos. 10 and 12).

The letters and administrative documents also refer to a variety of craftsmen's raw materials and their products. Most valuable are probably the ivory (*šinnu* (*ša pīri*)) and “ebony” (*ašiu*)³¹: these seem to have been kept together in a box or basket (*quppu*).³² Text 16 indicates that some of the ebony had been brought in by a trading venture of Siqi-ilani, and in text 11:26–7 an individual artefact³³ of ivory and ebony is to be extracted from the box and its weight recorded before being despatched to Babu-aḥa-iddina. Text 10:6–7 refers to “ivory which has been taken out of the storeroom and placed under the responsibility of the house supervisor”, which is to be entrusted to Mušallim-Aššur and brought by him to Babu-aḥa-iddina: apparently it has its weight inscribed on it, and Ma'nayu and his colleagues are to weigh it themselves and send him a note of its deficient weight.³⁴

³⁰ If “sweet reed” (rather than *emdu* see p. 211) is to be identified with *Cyperus esculentus*; John Bennet notes that sedge tubers are also mentioned in Linear B texts (as *ku-pa-ro*, see Melena 1974; and now with much detail Sarpaki 2001, 217–19).

³¹ *Ašiu* is the Assyrian form of the Babylonian *ušû*, which is conventionally translated “ebony”. In Mari texts it was valued at one shekel of silver per 42 or 30 shekels of wood (Kupper 1993, 168).

³² Containers called *quppu* were used for tablets in Urad-Šerua's storeroom. The “ivory and ebony hamper” is mentioned in texts 11:25–6; 16:25–6 (six years later “under the responsibility of the house supervisor” to be sent to Babu-aḥa-iddina); 55 (received by Babu-aḥa-iddina).

³³ This unknown artefact is written *šu-ri-is-ta* see CAD Š/iii, 349.

³⁴ 10–11: *šūqulta-ša ina šinni šaṭrat šaknat attunu šūqulta-ša maṭīta šuprāni*.

Silver is rarely mentioned in this whole archive,³⁵ and gold never, but there is some copper and tin.³⁶ Text 51 records that three blocks (*gurru*) of tin weighing 3 talents 12 minas (i.e. about 100 kg) had come in from a trade venture of Siqi-ilani, plus a further 1 talent 20 minas of tin collected by Ma'nayu, along with some antimony (*luliu*) which Siqi-ilani had presented as an audience gift (*kī nāmurte*). All this was issued(?) to the workshop (*bēt qāte*). In No. 10, Ma'nayu and his colleagues are instructed to issue 1 mina of copper plus 7 ½ shekels of tin to the smith for making razors. No. 71 is a memorandum which records the disposition of two 54-mina copper ingots and 30 minas of emery which had been brought down from the storeroom in the courtyard: one ingot of copper has been transported to Mušallim-Aššur and Ukal-siqi-Aššur for making bronze pegs and hoes, the other has been taken to Arbail with Babu-aḥa-iddina, while the emery was "sealed with Babu-aḥa-iddina's seals and entrusted to Aššur-zuqpanni the house supervisor". Finished metal artefacts included bronze and iron daggers, a steel(?) spearhead and a chain (*šuršurrātu*) (No. 61:10–17 – quoted earlier), and probably also a chestful of arrowheads (*ḡišṭup-ni-na ša GAG.Ú.TAG.GA.MEŠ*, No. 9:31).

That the household was involved in other branches of craft production is clear from further references to raw materials. Composite bows were wrapped in tree bark called *seḥpu*, and there was a room or container called the *bēt seḥpi* (No. 5:19).³⁷ The emery (*šammu*) just mentioned was used by the *purkullu* (mentioned in text 5:17) for drilling holes in beads, cylinder seals and so forth.³⁸ Glue, *šimtu* in Akkadian, was issued for work on a chariot wheel and as an aid to silver overlay in No. 53, and again in No. 56, to a carpenter for a chariot. Of two other mineral substances of which 20 minas each is to be withdrawn from storage in No. 6, *kalakkutu* and *kalguqqu*, the former is otherwise unattested, but *kalguqqu* is thought to be a red earth used in making glass, among other things. Etymologically the first half of this Sumerian loan word is identical with the word borrowed into Akkadian as *kalû* and found in Neo-Babylonian texts referring to a mineral mixed with the wax filling of writing-boards.³⁹ Because we know that the household kept considerable quantities of wax, very possibly one or both of these substances referred to orpiment (arsenic sulphide), which was identified as an additive to the wax filling of the 8th-century ivory writing-boards from Nimrud.⁴⁰ Text 26 indicates that on one occasion Babu-aḥa-iddina required all the wax the household could muster, and No. 48 is a memorandum recording a total of 11 ½ talents of wax "which Babu-aḥa-iddina gave to the king". This represents about 345 kilograms; its purpose is not specified, but if it was all intended for waxed wooden writing-boards (*lê'u*) even Babu-aḥa-iddina's extensive household could hardly have required so much, and the amount given to the king must reflect the scale of the royal chancery or a different purpose altogether (metallurgy?).

³⁵ In No. 53 it is used as overlay for an elephant hide yoke².

³⁶ I translate AN.NA BABBAR (*annuku paši'u*) as "tin" (see p. 55), confirmed by the casting recipe in text 10.

³⁷ See Postgate 2004b, 457b for wrapping bows, including birch bark examples from Tutankhamun's tomb.

³⁸ For the identification and usage of *šammu* = emery see Degraeve 1996, 23–4.

³⁹ See CAD K 73 s.v. *kalgukku* and 94–5, s.v. *kalû* B.

⁴⁰ Mallowan 1954, 99–100.

Like the bronze and the bark, the alum (*abnagabiu*) in text 16 has a separate room or container to itself, from which a talent (30 kg) is to be withdrawn. This material has a variety of purposes: in text 57, three minas go to the leather worker (LŪ.AŠGAB) for work on a chariot, and a mere 10 shekels to Sin-šallimanni the doctor for the preservation of herbs. Alum was certainly used in the curing of leather,⁴¹ and leather items are occasionally mentioned. They include the leather boots to be made in both Assyrian and Katmuḥaeen style by the leather worker in No. 4, and leather sacks (*naruqqu*) and other containers (*gusānu* and *bēt ša battāte*⁴²) mentioned in texts 22 and 87.⁴³ In text 87, these leather items are listed alongside linen textiles, probably because they were stored with them. Textiles, both linen and woolen, are the most frequently mentioned commodity in the whole archive, and the household handled both the raw materials and finished products. In text 26, Aššur-šallimanni passes on Babu-aḥa-iddina's demand for "much wool" (SĪG.MEŠ *ma-da-te*) for Suḥaeen garments (TŪG.ĤI.A *su-ḥa-ie-e*), and in No. 86 he himself gives orders for five different issues of wool – some of it in the charge of Aššur-zuqpani. In text 11, Babu-aḥa-iddina in person sends 25 minas of red wool (*ta-bar-[r]i-ba*) and 20 minas of purple wool (*ḥa-á[š-m]a-na*) to Aššur to be consigned to the storeroom. Some dyed wool (SĪG *ši-ir-pa*) is already in the storerooms, because they are also charged with airing it and making work-assignment (*iškāru*) allocations from it (No. 11:22–3). Similarly in No. 5 he orders Kidin-Gula and his colleagues to extract the dyed wool from the chest room (*bēt tupnināte*) and issue it for the work-assignment of the town of Lemutti-Marduk.⁴⁴ The storerooms also held a variety of cloth or finished clothing. Sleeves, or a sleeved garment (TŪG *aḥātu*), of dyed wool are stored in a chest within one of the storerooms (text 15). In No. 11:15–21, items to be extracted from the chests include "2 work-garments of the countryside" (2 TŪG.ĤI.A *ša KIN ša še-e-ri*), together with some attachments (*a-di ma-ak-li-li-šu-nu*), one garment of linen; one green(?) teaselled(?) garment⁴⁵ which is under the responsibility of the house supervisor is also to be checked and sealed. In No. 5, Kidin-Gula and his two colleagues are told to cut a length of cloth from a textile of thick linen and send it to Babu-aḥa-iddina. In No. 8, Ma'nayu and his colleagues are instructed to send any *ḥa-ʾu* textiles⁴⁶ which are not washed (TŪG.ĤI.A.MEŠ *ḥa-ʾu la ma-si-ú-tu*). In No. 6, the household staff is to get all the chests out of the storeroom and let Babu-aḥa-iddina's representatives take as much as they choose of the "clothing either from inside the chests with my seals, or from the clothing which Aḥu-ṭab, the merchant, consigned". On occasion the household staff is requested to check the clothing chests and give the textiles an

⁴¹ Stol 1980–3, 534. Compare 2 minas 35 shekels of *ab-na ga-bi-ú* going to a leather worker along with other materials (cowhides, sinews, madder) for the repair of a chariot in the Urad-Šerua archive (Postgate 1988a, No. 24). For alum and some of its multiple uses see Degraeve 1996, 25–8. For alum (Greek *st(r)uptēria*) in the Mycenaean world J. Bennet refers me to Aura Jorro 1993 s.v. *tu-ru-pte-ri-ja*.

⁴² CAD B, 214–15 has this under *betātu*, but it is difficult to separate this term from the textiles listed under *šabattu* in CAD Š/i, 8a.

⁴³ The bladder (*ellapuḥu*) used for Babu-aḥa-iddina's personal bath gel (*šamnu ša napšušiya*) may also have been a product of the leather worker (Nos. 8:28; 10:12; 12 rev. 10).

⁴⁴ Or Ša-Limlik-Marduk (see Freydank & Saporetti 1989, 22).

⁴⁵ 1 TŪG.ĤI.A *bi-ir-ša er-qa ša-ú-pa* – where the meanings of *biršu* and *erqu* are only roughly understood, and that of *ša'upu* is uncertain.

⁴⁶ Meaning unknown.

airing (*nupūša nappiṣā*, No. 11:14; cf. No. 66 rev. 21). In No. 9:20–25, Ma'nayu and colleagues are instructed: “If there is damaged clothing, give it to the tailor (*kāṣiru*) and let him check (it).” The general term *lubultu* (“clothing”) may refer to a variety of different items, as in No. 66, where more than 20 garments are summed up as *lubultu lapittu* “damaged(?) clothing”. They include luxury items, such as garments called *ḫulannu* with typical Middle Assyrian representational designs such as cedar trees or crossed mountain goats, others in red or purple wool, and one embroidered⁴⁷ piece.

Craftsmen and Work-Assignments

The household not only stored raw materials and finished products, but with certain materials was actively involved in organising production. In No. 5, the staff is ordered to get dyed wool out of the chests and issue it “as the work-assignment (*iškāru*) of Lemutti-Marduk”, and certain textiles are designated in the correspondence and in one of the memoranda (60) as the “work-assignment of the town of Lemutti-Marduk” (texts 8 and 23). From the context it is clear that these have been produced by, or in, the town, under a work-assignment system, wool being supplied to craft workers expected to return finished garments. Nothing else is known of this town, which only appears in Babu-aḥa-iddina's Archive, but the obvious deduction is that, for whatever historical reason, there were weavers in this town who had obligations to manufacture textiles for Babu-aḥa-iddina. While the *iškāru* of a town is occasionally mentioned elsewhere, the more usual formulation associates the work-assignment with a person.

Text 62 (AfO 19 Taf. VII.1)

1 ^{túg}*iš-ḫa-na-be ša* ŪR BABBAR
 GIŠ.GĀR *ša munus* *al-la-an-zu*
 1 TUG.BAR.DUL GIŠ.GĀR *ša* ¹SUM-^d*a-šur*
GIŠ.GĀR *ša li-me* ^{1,d}*iš-tár-KAM*
 1 ^{túg}*iš-ḫa-na-be ša* ŪR BABBAR
 GIŠ.GĀR *ša munus* *al-la-an-zu*
ša li-me
^{1,d}*a-šur-da-is-su-nu*
iš-tu lu-bu-ul-te
ša ^g*tup-ni-na-te*
a-na ^{uru}*ar-ba-il*
¹*mu-šal-lim-d* ^{a-šur} ¹EN-*le-ter*₅
^{1,d}AG-EN-SIG₅ ^ù ¹10-*tu-ra*
il-te-qe-ú
a-na ¹*si-qi*-DINGIR.MEŠ-*ni a-na* KASKAL
 KUR *ki-na-ḫi*
ta-ad-na
 ITI *ša sa-ra-te* UD.12.KĀM
li-mu
¹*ú-sa-at-d* AMAR.UTU

1 *išhanabe* garment, with white attachment,
 work-assignment of Allanzu,
 1 *kusitu* robe, work-assignment of Iddin-Aššur,
work-assignment for the eponymate of Ištar-eriš.
 1 *išhanabe* garment, with white attachment,
 work-assignment of Allanzu,
 for the eponymate of
 Aššur-daissunu –
 with the clothing
 of the chests
 to Arbail
 Mušallim-Aššur, Bel-leter,
 Nabu-bel-*da'iq* and Adad-tura
 have taken (them) –
 to Siqi-ilani for a Canaan-venture
 they have been issued.
 Month of Ša-sarrate,
 eponymate of
 Usat-Marduk.

⁴⁷ The *ḫulannu* was an upper garment with or without sleeves; the possibly embroidered (*ša'upu*) piece also had some attachment (ŪR *gimri*).

The work-assignments of Allanzu and Iddin-Aššur are mentioned in other memoranda from the archive: Allanzu, a woman (No. 63, also twice, as on No. 62), responsible in each instance for one *išhanabe* garment (in three of the four cases with a white attachment (*ša ŪR BABBAR*)), and Iddin-Aššur, a man (No. 64), responsible in each case for one *kusītu*. No. 79 listed the work-assignments of a woman (Ambi[...]) and a man (Arši[...]), which may have included *šubātu* (TÚG.ĤI.A) and *naḥlaptu* coats (TÚG.GŪ.È). Often the scribe specifies which eponym year the work-assignment relates to: text 62, dated to Usat-Marduk (year 20), lists textiles from the eponymates of Ištar-eriš (13) and Aššur-da'issunu (17), while texts 63 and 64, both written on the same day as 62, have one textile from Lullayu's eponymate (14), followed in No. 63 by one from Aššur-ketti-ide's (15). It follows (1) that one of the persons involved had a consistent relationship with the household lasting for at least 4, and perhaps as many as 8, years; (2) that the work-assignments were assigned year by year; and (3) that garments produced in a given year could be and were identified as such. In other words, this was an abiding arrangement through which the household secured a regular supply of garments. Some at least of these were intended as export items to the west, but in No. 23:10–16 three possible qualities of textile from the *iškāru* of Lemutti-Marduk are mentioned: “whether those which are presented to the king, or the good ones, or the second-class ones”.⁴⁸ It is possible, though not demonstrable, that Allanzu and Iddin-Aššur's personal work-assignments are part of the general work-assignment of Lemutti-Marduk.

The evidence of these textile texts allows us to deduce something about two other topics, the Babu-aḥa-iddina household's relationship with craft workers, on one hand, and merchants on the other. Most of the tablets mentioning textile work-assignments are in fact memoranda recording the issue of the garments in question to Siqi-ilani.⁴⁹ Although he is not given the title, he must have been a merchant: in two cases, we are told that this was for a trading journey to Canaan (No. 62 and No. 64:5–6). We have met Siqi-ilani before: he is listed as one of Babu-aḥa-iddina's representatives in text 6 (the same year as Nos. 62–4), which is partly concerned with stored clothing. In other contexts we see that he did not exclusively deal in textiles: memorandum No. 51, some 10 years earlier, lists three ingots of tin, weighing 3 talents 12 minas “of a venture of Siqi-ilani, which he brought in the eponymate of Ina-pi-Aššur-lišlim”, and also “5 minas of old antimony (and) 7 minas of antimony, which Siqi-ilani presented as an audience gift (*kī nāmurte uqarribūni*)”. About 8 years after Nos. 62–4 Siqi-ilani is still in evidence, because in text 16:14–17 Babu-aḥa-iddina asks to have “all of the ebony of the venture of Siqi-ilani” sealed and [sent to him(?)].⁵⁰ It seems reasonable to conclude that Siqi-ilani had a regular association with Babu-aḥa-iddina's household over some two decades during the reign of Shalmaneser and the early years of Tukulti-Ninurta, and that his trading activity included transporting two types of Assyrian garments (*išhanabe* and *kusītu*) to the Levant (“Canaan”), and perhaps bringing back from there tin, antimony and “ebony” (no

⁴⁸ *lu-ú ša a-na LUGAL qar-ru-bu-ú-ni lu-ú SIG₅-šu-nu [ù] lu-ú 2-i-te-šu-nu* (l. 15 after Freydank, pers. comm.). Presumably those suitable for royalty were the finest quality – suggesting that the Neo-Sumerian grade of lugal could have its origin in this concept – “fit for the king” (see Waetzoldt 1972, 47).

⁴⁹ For the contribution these texts make to our knowledge of Middle Assyrian trade see especially Faist 2001, 98–108.

⁵⁰ *giš a-ši-a ša 'KASKAL¹-ni ša 'si-qi-[DINGIR.ME]š-ni gab-bu-šu*, as collated by H. Freydank (pers. comm.).

doubt along with other commodities). He may not have been the only merchant engaged in such activity: in the same month in letter No. 6 Babu-aḥa-iddina mentions “clothing which Aḥu-ṭab the merchant consigned”, although regrettably uncertainty about the precise implication of *tuāru* D in this context hinders our understanding of the transaction.⁵¹ Aḥu-ṭab is very likely also mentioned in association with wool in the earlier text No. 50, which raises the possibility that he preceded Siqi-ilani as the household’s principal merchant. He may well be the same Aḥu-ṭab mentioned in the Stewards’ Archive as having lost three copper ingots in the city of Emar (see No. 56), suggesting that he may have traded for the palace as well as for Babu-aḥa-iddina.

Although work-assignments (*iškāru*) are best attested for textiles, other commodities were also produced under the same system. In letter No. 5, after having instructions on issuing wool for the *iškāru* of Lemutti-Marduk, Kidin-Gula and his colleagues are ordered to “open the storeroom, extract the *iškāru* of the stone-worker (*purkullu*)⁵² and issue it (to him), (and) open the bark-house, extract the bark for bow(s) and issue it as (his) *iškāru* to the bowyer”.⁵³ Other craftsmen also feature in contexts where the *iškāru* system is not mentioned and may not be involved. In No. 56, glue was issued to a carpenter called Šamaš-apla-ereš for a chariot. Work on a chariot was also undertaken by the leather worker Baḥtu-kašid, who receives alum for this in No. 57, and is again involved with a chariot in the broken memorandum 59, perhaps 3 years later. Back in the reign of Adad-nirari, Babu-aḥa-iddina writes to members of his staff telling them to speak to Ilu-ki-abiya the leather worker and convey an urgent request for two pairs of boots, one “Assyrian” and the other “Katmuḥaeen”, with instructions to get felt for the Assyrian boots from the Chief Felt maker (LÚ.GAL *sa-pi-e*) if necessary. A leather worker specialising in shields (LÚ.AŠGAB^{kuš} *a-ri-a-te*) is mentioned in the very fragmentary letter from Babu-aḥa-iddina No. 20. Because we know the storerooms included bronze and tin, it is no surprise that a smith is occasionally mentioned. Some metal (perhaps copper which is mentioned in l. 1) was issued to Urad-Ea-šarri, the smith (LÚ.SIMUG) in No. 59. More informative is Babu-aḥa-iddina’s letter No. 10 which merits quoting verbatim:

Text No. 10:16–32 (KAV 205)

1 MA.NA URUDU [(x)] 7 ½ GÍN AN.[NA] BABBAR
bi-la-te-šu ul-te-bi-l[a]
a-na LÚ.SIMUG na-ag-li-b[e] a-na e-pa-še
dī-na a-na 2-šu na-a[g-l]i-be
²⁰ *ù ša ḥa-su-pi ša 10 GÍN.T[A.À]M*
ù 2 ša šu-up-[ri]
ša 3 GÍN.TA.À[M ...]
a-na tar-ši¹ ma-a-na-i[e-e]

I am sending 1 mina of copper (and) 7 1/2
 shekels of tin, its alloy.⁵⁴
 Issue it to the smith for making razors –
 two razor sets,
 and two tweezers of 10 shekels each,
 and two nail-(trimmers?)
 of 3 shekels each [...]
 In the presence of Ma’nayu

⁵¹ The phrase used is *ša¹ a-ḥu-DÜG.GA ú-ta-e-ra-ni* (same phrase in l. 44). See footnote 69 for the problem of the precise meaning of *tuāru* D in these texts.

⁵² The assignment could have included emery (thirty minas of which are mentioned in No. 71).

⁵³ In l. 22, Freydank and Saporetti have LÚ.AŠGAB (“leather worker”), but the copy has a sign without the strong isolated initial vertical visible for example in No. 57 (KAV 223) where AŠGAB is not in doubt, so that we may read LÚ.ZADIM = *sassinnu*, which is obviously appropriate. Indeed the sign here is identical to that copied by Freydank in LÚ.ZADIM BAN.MEŠ MARV 3.46 rev. 9’.

⁵⁴ The ratio of 60:7.5 copper:tin gives a percentage of 12.5 per cent, metallurgically very plausible, cf. Limet 1960, 64.

ù ^{1d} a-šur-EN-šal-lim

²⁵ bi-la-te li-ib-lu-u[l]

ù ḥa-ra-ma na-ag-li-[b]e

ša ḥa-su-pi ù ša šu-up-ri

i+na ra-aṭ ZABAR a-na bat-ta-te

ia-a-ma-at-tu a-na ¹ṭé² mi-šu liš-pu-uk

³⁰ ù ḥa-ra-ma-ma a-[na] e-pa-še li-iš-bat

iš-tu a-ḥ[a-i]š [l]u la-a i-šap-pa-ak

URUDU ù [bi]l-la-tu(-)ša i[l-te-]ni-iš

.....

and Aššur-bel-šallim

let him mix the alloy,

and afterwards let him pour the razors,

the tweezers and the nail-(trimmers?)

through a bronze pipe separately

each into its mould(?),

and afterwards let him take them to work on.

He should not pour them all together.

The copper and the alloy which together ...

(remainder lost)

This vividly demonstrates the degree of control Babu-aḥa-iddina exercised over some of his craftsmen. The raw materials come from him, and he evidently expects to receive back the finished items. It is possible that in the following broken passage he uses the word *iškāru* (l. 34: a-na GIŠ.[GÀR(-šu) (?)] at-ti-din).

From the four early texts dating to the reign of Adad-nirari we learn of another activity, the production of perfumed oil. The household staff, at this date Šilli-Ea-šarri and Bel-libur, are charged by Babu-aḥa-iddina with keeping a strict eye on a man called Sareni, who has been clapped in chains and sent to the house at Aššur.⁵⁵ He is not to leave the “oil-house”, and if Babu-aḥa-iddina hears that he has come out into the outer courtyard “I will not let you live!” The nature of his offence is not mentioned, but another letter from Babu-aḥa-iddina on the same day begins “Sareni should sit and perfume his oil together (with others)” (*lu-ú-šab IĀ-šu lu-ra-qi iš-tu a-ḥa-iš* No. 3:5–7) and ends by saying “They should sit and perfume oil together” (ll. 23–4). The others must be the women known as *muraqqi’ātu* (“perfumers”) who we learn from No. 4 were being taught the skill of perfuming oil by Sareni but seem to have needed some encouragement, as the household staff is required to say to them “Learn your profession as perfumers (*muraqqi’ūtikina lamdā*)”, failing which they will have their throats cut. Earlier on in the letter the aromatics (GIŠ.ŠIM DÜG.GA) needed are also mentioned. It sounds as though both Sareni and his pupils were living in the house, presumably around the inner courtyard, which doubtless offered seclusion to the women.

Last but not least, textile workers. Presumably those named as producing work-assignment garments, especially Allanzu and Iddin-Aššur, were weavers (*i/ušpar(t)u*), but their profession is not mentioned in the texts. By contrast, we do encounter two men designated as tailor (usually LÜ.KA.KÉŠ but written ^(lú)ka-ši-ra/ru in Nos. 12:8; 16:8). Adad-tura and Ešar-den-Nusku are sent with the representatives in No. 11, and likewise Adad-tura alone accompanies them in letters 12, 16, and 17, as well as in No. 62 where they take textiles to Arbail. He also is one of the addressees of No. 7, and turns up in No. 61, receiving one garment (*kiddapaše*) from Babu-aḥa-iddina and taking one *ašiannu* garment to give to the palace. Very likely he (or Ešar-den-Nusku) is also the unnamed tailor in No. 9:20–2, where Babu-aḥa-iddina writes, “If there is damaged clothing, give it to the tailor for him

⁵⁵ If, as seems likely given the rarity of the name, he is the *sar-re-ni* named as the grandfather of Nabu-kette, one of the sellers of land to Babu-aḥa-iddina in No. 31, he came from a Kilizu family. The name may be Hurrian.

to check” (*ana LÚ.KA.KÉŠ dinā lišur*). This all builds up a picture of a regular member of the household over a period of at least eight years in Adad-tura’s case, with responsibility for the condition of the textiles and clothing. Etymologically a *kāširu* should be a “knotter”, which would be appropriate for a maker of pile carpets (and agrees well with the opposition between the “knotter’s work” (*šipar kāširi*) and the “multi-coloured weaver’s work”, applying to carpets or tapestries), but even if this was the original meaning it is clear that he now had a wider remit.⁵⁶

The Household Enterprise

If we now pull the threads together, we can reconstitute some of the roles of this elite household. A variety of raw materials are acquired and stored, and arrangements made to process them into goods which may have served the immediate needs of the household’s residents, but could also be presented as gifts outside the household or entrusted to merchants engaged in foreign trade. To maintain these activities there was a cadre of staff: the staff was expected to control the storerooms, checking (*ašāru*) and sometimes weighing⁵⁷ the contents, if necessary to dry (*še-e-ú-ni*, No. 23:8) and air (*nappušu*, e.g. Nos. 11:14, 22; 16:12) the wool or textiles, to see fresh items correctly stored (No. 23), to extract (*šēšiāni*) from storage items required by Babu-aḥa-iddina and to despatch them securely under seal (*kunkā šēbilāni*), sometimes accompanied by written documentation of what was done (see No. 6). They were also expected to issue raw materials to craftsmen for processing, and to supervise them (as the coppersmith in No. 10), transmitting detailed written instructions to them – “read out the tablet before him (the leather-worker)” (*tuppa ana pānišu sisiā*, No. 4:10–12, in this case in the presence of witnesses!). Some craftsmen received their raw materials and carried out their work under the work-assignment (*iškāru*) system, which seems to have involved an annual allocation of raw materials followed by the delivery of finished products. A stone worker (*purkullu*) and a bowyer (*sassinu*), who seem to have been in easy reach of the household, were employed under this system, while textile workers (presumably weavers) with a long-standing association with the household worked in the town of Lemutti-Marduk. It is difficult to know whether other craftsmen (e.g. food processors, or the doctor Sin-šallimanni who received boots in No. 61 but also alum to assist in his work in No. 57) worked under the *iškāru* system (with a delimited obligation) or simply as direct employees of the household expected to take whatever work was thrown at them. It is notable that we do not, in these sections of the household’s documentation, meet any records relating to the distribution of food and drink or to the administration of personnel.

While much of the output of the household’s productive staff was probably for internal consumption, occasional phrases betray external uses. Some commodities are recorded as going to

⁵⁶ Although with Röllig (1980, 113) it does not seem necessary or even desirable to posit two different words as proposed by CAD K 265!

⁵⁷ See No. 10:10–11 “Its weight is inscribed on the ivory – you send me (notification of) its deficient weight” (KI.LÁ-ša i+na ši-i[n-n]i šaṭ-rat [š]a-ak-na-at at-tu-nu KI.LÁ-ša m[a]-ti-ta šu-up-ra-ni). No. 11:28 “weigh (and) write the weight” (*hi-ta KI.LÁ šu-ut-ra*) of ebony and ivory.

the palace: textiles – an *ašiannu* and a “*lubēru* for sacrifices” were “issued” (*tadin*) to the palace in No. 61:6, 24. The fragmentary tablet No. 68 probably mentioned at least two chariots presented to the king on separate occasions, while No. 57 records 3 minas (~1.5 kg) of alum issued to a leather worker “for the work on the chariot which was presented to the King during the induction into the House of Aššur”.⁵⁸ The surprisingly large amount of 11 1/2 talents (~345 kg) of wax was given by Babu-aḥa-iddina to the king in text No. 8, and wool or textiles are mentioned as presented to the king in Mušallim-Aššur’s letter No. 23:12–13. No. 47 is a note of wine given to “Tukulti-Ninurta, the king’s son”, and he is also the recipient of two garments “as a present” (*kī rimutte*) in No. 60. These were from the work-assignment of Lemutti-Marduk, and therefore a product of the household, as were the “5 coloured wraps” given to Ramat-Šalaya in the second entry on the same tablet; unfortunately we have no way of knowing who she was or why she received these wraps. A coat (*naḥlaptu*) was given to [...]šallim, an envoy (DUMU *ši-ip-ri*) in No. 80, of whom we can say little except that he was probably not a household member. Regrettably fragmentary is the Istanbul tablet No. 67 which seems to have mentioned clothing for the Hittite king. This reminds us that Babu-aḥa-iddina was himself the recipient of correspondence from the Hittite king when the succession was passing to Tukulti-Ninurta, but already in No. 2 from the reign of Adad-nirari he is writing about the servant of an envoy from a foreign ruler. Also from this early stage are the group of five memoranda from the eponymate of Ninurta-emuqaya (Nos. 42–6), noting the issue of wine for a variety of religious ceremonies, while No. 11:39 mentions clothing taken for a harvesting ceremony, which is now being returned.

This much of the “House of Babu-aḥa-iddina” is visible to us, but how much are we not seeing? Weidner commented that his archives must have included many more letters, legal documents and administrative texts, most of which were probably consigned to the rubbish tip in antiquity (1959–60, 38). Indeed what has reached us is largely restricted to the practical administration of the commodities of the household, and the haphazard composition of the archive is emphasised by the wide gaps in the time span, with a small group way back in the time of Adad-nirari, but the bulk of the letters from the end of Shalmaneser’s reign. The assemblage is not of course entirely random, and we can observe some differences between Ass. 14410 and Ass. 14445: the letters from Babu-aḥa-iddina are all in Ass. 14410, as are those from his staff and representatives; whereas the two rather different letters from Aššur-mušašri (No. 25) and Mušallimat-Ištar (No. 27) were in Ass. 14445. The majority of the bilateral documents in Group III come from Ass. 14445, three of which stand out because they belong to Libur-zanin-Aššur (Nos. 39–41) and are dated by his eponymate (as late as year 29 in the sequence). The two documents concerned with land sale, which are the nearest we come to the personal affairs of the family, also both come from Ass. 14445 (Nos. 31 and 36). These belong to the years before the main bulk of the letters, and so do the two documents recording the issue of grindstones by Kidin-Gula (Nos. 32 and 34). Kidin-Gula is also involved in Nos. 33 (also “early”), 35 (date lost) and 38 (year 20).

Strikingly absent from the two archives recovered from above the family vault is any mention of the family. Unless, as seems improbable, there was another, contemporary, member of the Assyrian elite called Babu-aḥa-iddina, he had a son called Ina-pi-Aššur-lišlim who held

⁵⁸ *ana šipar GIŠ.GIGIR ša i+na tērubat Ê ḏa-šur ana LUGAL qar-ru-bat-ni.*

the eponymate around 15 years before the end of Shalmaneser's reign, and cannot have been a total non-entity, but this name is not encountered once in the Ass. 14410 and Ass. 14445 texts, except in the date of No. 51 as eponym. Presumably if he was an eponym, he like his father held high office in the state, most likely as a provincial governor, and this may have made it difficult for him to have a role in the administration of the parental household. Interestingly, this invisibility of the family seems to have continued after Babu-aḫa-iddina himself had passed on: still in the middle of the 12th century a substantial gift of thirty sheep was received by the regent Ninurta-tukul-Aššur from "Bulalu, the steward (AGRIG) of the House of Babu-aḫa-iddina" (Weidner 1935–6, No. 90). As for other sons or daughters, and even his wife, we simply have no information.⁵⁹ This must reflect the limited nature of the written material which has reached us.

Authority and Delegation

Having seen something of the household's activities, it is time to revert to its administrative structure. As described previously, when Babu-aḫa-iddina sent a group of his staff members to carry out his instructions, he formally designated them as his representatives, delegating his authority to them, and the letter, either preceding them or carried with them, confirmed to those who held authority in the household in his absence that they were indeed his delegates. It is likely that most if not all of the letters in Group I were enclosed in a clay envelope impressed with a seal of Babu-aḫa-iddina: fragmentary envelopes bearing the impression of a handsome seal showing a prancing bull were found with the Ass. 14410 tablet group, one still carrying the remains of his name.⁶⁰ No. 29, in Istanbul, is another envelope fragment from Ass. 14410 bearing the word *tup-pí* [sic?], in line with other envelopes for letters such as those found at Durkatlimmu, which say *tup-pí* PN₁ *ana* PN₂.⁶¹ Authenticated by the impression of his seal, no doubt familiar to all concerned, the letter would ensure that the authority of the delegates to fulfil his instructions would be accepted by the staff on the receiving end in the household.

The formality with which authority was delegated in these instances suggests that there would have been clearly delineated areas of responsibility within the household's administration, and there is some evidence to support this. This is the implication behind passages like this section of a memorandum recording a number of commodity movements:

4 GÍR ša ZABAR	4 daggers of bronze
1 GÍR ša AN.BAR	1 dagger of iron
1 <i>ul-mu ša ḫa-bal-gi-ni</i>	1 lance of steel
<i>ša i+na pi-ti</i> ^{1.d} <i>a-šur-zu-qup-pa-ni</i>	which were under the responsibility of Aššur-zuqpanni

⁵⁹ It is certainly possible, though no more, that Mušallimat-Ištar, the author of No. 27, was the wife of Babu-aḫa-iddina, but the fact that Ramat-Šalaya in No. 60 is recorded as her daughter (and not as the daughter of Babu-aḫa-iddina) would seem to make this less likely (cf. p. 203 footnote 10).

⁶⁰ VAT 8981: (]^{1.d}*ba-b*]*u-ŠEŠ-SU[M-na]* (see Freydank 1974c, Tafel 1, and in general Weidner 1959–60, 33).

⁶¹ This might of course be part of the same envelope as VAT 8981 or another of the Berlin fragments. For an example from Durkatlimmu see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 35: *tup-pí* ^{1.d}SILIM-*ma-nu-mu-šab-ši a-na* ¹*ma-su-ku* ¹*i[š-t]* ¹*u-dIM-gab-be* (see Taf. 46 for a photo).

^{1.d}*ba-bu*-A-PAB *ma-ḥi-ir*
a-na É ZABAR *ut-ta-er*

Babu-aḥa-iddina has received.
 He has consigned (them) to the bronze house.

No. 61:10–17

The key term here is *pittu*, rendered in CAD P 443–4 as “area of responsibility”, giving the nuance which fits best with our archive. Thus the textiles and wool in a letter addressed by Mušallim-Aššur to Aššur-zuqpanni are described as being “washed (and) dried and deposited in your (area of) responsibility” (*i+na pi-it-tu-ka*, No. 23:7).⁶² No 61 explicitly records that Aššur-zuqpanni had been responsible for six metal items, but that his master had relieved him of that responsibility. This memorandum dates to Usat-Marduk (20), and we do not know what post Aššur-zuqpanni held in this year, but a similar situation is reflected in a letter sent by Nabu-bel-da’iq on behalf of Babu-aḥa-iddina to Aššur-bel-šallim and Aššur-zuqpanni jointly:

No. 26

[*a*]-*na* ^{1.d}*a-šur*-EN-*šal-lim*
 ù ^{1.}[^d*a-šur-z*]u-*qup-pa-ni*
qí-bi-ma
um-ma ^{1.d}AG-EN-SIG₅-*ma*
i+na a-bat ^{1.d}*ba-bu*-ŠEŠ-SUM-*na*
al-tap-ra-ku-nu
 DUḪ.LĀL *lu-ú ša pi-ti*
 ša UGU É
lu-ú ša NA₄.KIŠIB-*ki*
 ša ^{1.d}*ba-bu*-ŠEŠ-SUM-*na*
 ù *lu ša ki-am-ma*
ša-ak-nu-ú-ni
am-mar šu-ut-ni
té-ma šu-up¹-ra-ni
ma-a a-ku-ki-a DUḪ.LĀL
 ‘*i+na*’¹ *a-ku-ki-a gi-gu-pi-‘e*¹
 ‘*ta*¹-ú-*ru*
 [ITI *ḥi-b*]ur UD.9.KAM *li-mu*
 [‘GIŠ.K]U-^dMAŠ UGULA

To Aššur-bel-šallim
 and Aššur-zuqpanni
 say:
 Thus Nabu-bel-da’iq:
 I am writing to you on the command
 of Babu-aḥa-iddina.
 (About) the wax, whether in the responsibility
 of the house supervisor,
 or under the seal
 of Babu-aḥa-iddina,
 or deposited in some other way –
 send me information on how much it is,
 saying “This much wax
 is consigned(?) in this many baskets(?)”.⁶³
 9th of Ḥibur, eponymate
 of Tukulti-Ninurta, the Overseer.

So it appears that items kept under the seal of Babu-aḥa-iddina were kept separate from those for which the house supervisor was held responsible (this could perhaps be Aššur-zuqpanni himself). Items are elsewhere described as being “under the responsibility of (*ina pittu*) the house supervisor” without giving his name: compare Nos. 8:11; 9:33; 10:7; 11:19, and the following passage:

⁶² The *-u-* before the personal suffix is normal with *pittu* in Middle Assyrian dialect, whatever its morphological origin (see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 146 on l. 29).

⁶³ This line, and *šu-up¹-ra-ni* two lines before, are restored differently from Freydank and Saporetti (1989, 74) in light of a collation of my own; further collation would be desirable. A word *giguppū* is not known; if it is correctly read, it is probably a Sumerian loan word, and it is of course possible that this should be *guppū*, with the reed determinative.

lu-bu-ul-ta ša UGU LUGAL
 ša i+na pi-ti ša UGU É na-áš-ku-ša-ni
 a-na ku-ri-il-li il-qe-ú-ni-ni
 ul-te-bi-lak-ku-nu mu-uḥ-ra
 áš-ra i+na pi-ti ša UGU É-ma
 lu ša-ak-na-at

the clothing for⁶⁴ the king, whose deposit should be
 under the responsibility of the house supervisor,⁶⁵
 (and) which they took for the harvest ceremony,
 I am sending to you. Receive (it),
 check (it), (and then) it is under the responsibility
 of the house supervisor that it should be deposited.

No. 11:37–42

The lack of professional titles attached to the names of the household staff and the representatives in the letters is frustrating. It seems likely from the title itself that the house supervisor would have been the person wielding authority in the house during Babu-aḥa-iddina's absences. As noted earlier, in the decade from the eponymate of Usat-Marduk (20) to Šunuqardu (28), this may have been Ma'nayu, although he is never given this title, preceded by Kidin-Gula and succeeded by Aššur-zuqpanni, who are both named as "house supervisor". Unfortunately, there are no clues as to the titles that the other members of the staff who did not have specialist qualifications might have held. Another title one might look for in this context is that of scribe. However, in the whole archive there is just one explicit mention of a scribe (Adad-kena-ušur, in No. 22,), and he is only brought in to ensure that a written report is returned and seems to have no executive authority.

One title elsewhere associated with the administration of goods is of course steward (AGRIG): in the mid 12th century, in the reign of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur, 30 sheep were presented to the king by "Bulalu, the steward of the House of Babu-aḥa-iddina" (Weidner 1935–6, No. 90:6–8; see Table 4.8), and his household is mentioned again in No. 101:18 of Mutta's Archive (Weidner 1935–6, 43). We simply do not know if the household included a steward back in the 13th century when Babu-aḥa-iddina was in action, and if it did, whether he would have been above or below the house supervisor in seniority. Some of those mentioned as recipients of the letters or as representatives certainly had administrative powers of their own. Of those mentioned as representatives (*qēpu*), Mušallim-Aššur is probably the most senior.⁶⁶ In No. 22 he says "I am writing to you on the command of Babu-aḥa-iddina" when giving instructions to Kidin-Gula, and later in the letter he cites the boss verbatim: "Babu-aḥa-iddina has said to me 'Send (a message) to him' (*šu-up-ra-šu*)."⁶⁷ He continues, "Write your tablet, (to say) where you issued (the leather items) to. I am sending you Adad-kena-ušur, the scribe, – write your tablet and send it to Babu-aḥa-iddina (saying) where you issued (them) to" – almost as though realising, as an afterthought, that Kidin-Gula would not be able to write the letter himself and would need a scribe. He is not the only member of staff who claims to be writing under instruction from Babu-aḥa-iddina: in No. 26 Nabu-bel-ūda'iq

⁶⁴ *ša* UGU LUGAL: this usage "for the king" must be differentiated from *ina* UGU PN, which records an obligation "incumbent on PN"; cf. No. 61:23 *ša* UGU ^{1.d}*ba-bu*-A-PAB, where the *lubēru* garment is not owed by Babu-aḥa-iddina but "for (his use)".

⁶⁵ For *ša* ... **naškun-ša-ni* literally "whose being deposited is under the responsibility of the house supervisor" (see Röllig 1980, 114, and note that the *-ni* is the Assyrian subjunctive tacked on to *naškun-ša*). For this use of the infinitive to convey a modal "should", cf. the forms *ta-da-šu-ni* and *ta-da-šu-nu-ni* to be understood as infinitives (*ša* ... *tadān-šu(nu)-ni*) "whose payment (should be)" in Freydank 1992a, Nos. 5 and 6.

⁶⁶ Around this time there was an eponym Mušallim-Aššur, conceivably the same man.

uses the same phrase, “at the command of Babu-aḥa-iddina”, while in No. 24 Aššur-bel-šallim alludes to the wishes of Babu-aḥa-iddina, making it clear that he is writing on his behalf, but in all these cases one presumes that the letter writers’ authority to act on their master’s behalf was recognised and did not need to be reinforced. These letters, and Nos. 22 and 23, are styled in a peremptory fashion reminiscent of Babu-aḥa-iddina’s own style, indicating that the author is either senior to, or at least of the same seniority as, the recipient.

Sealing Practices⁶⁷

We have already mentioned that some fragments bearing seal impressions from Ass. 14410 must derive from envelopes which enclosed the letters. The letters themselves, though, make frequent reference to the use of seals on clay sealings, most of which were probably uninscribed. Indeed, Babu-aḥa-iddina’s correspondence has been cited more than once as a *locus classicus* for sealing practices in Mesopotamia. Seals had been used on clay sealings long before the invention of writing and remained in use for the same purpose. Babu-aḥa-iddina himself sealed his big empty ointment bag when sending it for replenishing⁷ by the household (No. 10), and sealings were used to secure storerooms (*nakkamtu*), chests (*tupninnu*), hampers (*quppu*) and containers (identity not specified) in which items were transported between Babu-aḥa-iddina and his household at Aššur. Texts 6 and 15 may serve as characteristic examples of his instructions to his subordinates, but most of the letters in Group I have comparable passages.

a-na ¹mu-šal-lim-^da-šur
 ù ^{1,d}na-bi-um-EN-SIG₅
 qí-bi-ma
 um-ma ^{1,d}ba-bu-ŠEŠ-SUM-na-ma
 NA₄.KIŠIB ša pi-i ^{gis}tup-ni-na-te
 NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ia-ma ka-ni-ik
¹DÜG.GA-šíl-lí-^da-šur ul-te-bi-lak-ku-nu
 at-tu-nu ^{1,d}a-šur-EN-šal-lim
^{1,d}a-šur-su-qup-pa-ni ù ¹DÜG.GA-šíl-lí-^da-šur
 iš-tu a-ḥa-iš É na-kám-ta ^rx¹
 p[i]-ti-a ^{gis}tup-ni-na
 ša ^{tu}g a-ḥa-tu ša [ší]r-pi
 i+na ŠA-bi-ni še-ši-a-ni
 a-na 2-šu ^{tu}g a-ḥa-te
 ša šir-pi
 a-na pa-ni ta-ú-ra-te

To Mušallim-Aššur
 and Nabu-bel-da’iq
 say:
Thus Babu-aḥa-iddina:
 I am having Ṭab-šilli-Aššur
 bring you the seal for the chests,
 sealed with my seals.
 You, Aššur-bel-šallim,
 Aššur-zuqpanni and Ṭab-šilli-Aššur
 together open the storeroom,
 (and) get out the chest
 inside which are
 the sleeves of dyed wool.
 Extract 2 sets of sleeves
 of dyed wool
 previously consigned.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ See Röllig 1980, which explicitly discusses seal practice in the Babu-aḥa-iddina letters.

⁶⁸ The phrase *ana pāni ta’urâte* is difficult. Compare No. 5 (KAV 98):30 1 DUG.ŠAB ša ia-ar-zi-ib-ni pa-ni ta-ú-ri še-ši-a-ni “get out 1 bowl of perfumed oil ...”; also No. 20 (KAJ 5):7 [...] ta-ú-ra-te ù a-na pa-ni [...]. The word *ta’uru* (D stem adjective) qualifies *aḥātu*, *iarzibnu* and in No. 20 perhaps *ariâte* (“shields”). The D stem of *tuāru* is used in these letters several times when items are being consigned to their place of storage, and my translation reflects this, though without full confidence. Cf. also *ana (libbi) mimma taerā* (No. 5:19–20; 10:8; 11:20, 29). In No. 11:46, Babu-aḥa-iddina instructs his staff to store some wool he is sending with the same words as here, *ana (bēt) nakkamte ta-e-ra*. In this context it seems unlikely that he means “return”, so *turru* may merely have the general meaning of “consign to storage”.

še-li-a-ni

^{gi8}tup-ni-na

NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ia

ku-un-ka a-na É na-kám-te

ta-e-ra É na-kám-ta

NA₄.KIŠIB an-ni-a-ma ku-un-ka

i+na pi-i NA₄.KIŠIB-ia NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ku-nu

ku-un-ka ^{u8}a-ḥa-te ù NA₄.KIŠIB

1'DÜG.GA-šil-lí-^aa-šur li-il-qe-a

a-na UGU-ia lu-ub-la

šum-ma at-tu-nu ta-ku-ša

1'DÜG.GA-šil-lí-^aa-šur li-il-qe-a

ù la ki-a at-tu-nu-ma

le-qe-a-ni

ITI ša sa-ra-te UD.2[2].KÁM

li-mu ^{1.d}IM-EN-g[ab-be]

Seal the chest

with my seals,

(and) return (it) to the storeroom.

Seal the storeroom

with this same seal.

Seal my seal with your seals.

(and) let Ṭab-šilli-Aššur take

the sleeves and my seal

(and) bring (them) to me.

If you are delayed

let Ṭab-šilli-Aššur take (them)

or if not, then you take it to me

yourselves.

Month of Ša-sarrate, 22nd day,

eponymate of Adad-bel-g[abbe].

Text No. 15 (KAV 105)

In this scene, one of Babu-aḥa-iddina's own seals, itself secured in a package sealed with "my seals", is sent from his place of residence to the house at Aššur. The seal is to be used by his staff to re-seal the chest from which they have extracted garments (which had presumably been sealed with the same Babu-aḥa-iddina seal, because he described it as "the seal for the chests" (*ša pi-i É na-kám-a-te*)), and is then to be secured in a package sealed with their seals (presumably all three of them) and returned to Babu-aḥa-iddina. A very similar procedure was required in letter No. 6: there the representatives are bringing two of Babu-aḥa-iddina's seals, and at the end of the letter the staff members are instructed to secure them with their own seals and send them back. Transporting the seals under a sealing of course ensures that no one can misappropriate or misuse them on the way. In this instance one of the seals being sent is the "seal for the storerooms" (*ša pi-i É na-kám-a-te*), and the other is the "seal with the *laḥmu* for the chests".⁶⁹ The staff was expected to recognise his seals: in No. 66 we read of the textiles removed by Babu-aḥa-iddina's representatives that "their hems were sealed with Babu-aḥa-iddina's seal, (and) they were given to Kidin-Gula and Aššur-zuquppanni to check the seal impression (*ša NA₄.KIŠIB a-na a-ša-ri*)". As it happens, we may be able to identify the *laḥmu* seal: a cylinder seal depicting a nude, hairy man attacking a four-winged figure with a similar hairdo was rolled on an envelope fragment from Ass 14410 (VAT 12993; Figure 4.13).⁷⁰

Another seal rolled on envelope fragments from Ass. 14410 (VAT 8980, 8981) shows a prancing bull with three stars in the field, and bears his name carved on the seal

⁶⁹ The same two are probably meant in No. 5:8–10: "my seal for the chests and likewise my seal for the storerooms" (NA₄.KIŠIB *ša pi-i* ^{gi8}tup-ni-na-te ù NA₄.KIŠIB-ma *ša pi-i É na-kám-ma-te*). No. 12:6–8: "Seal the chests and the storeroom with this seal of mine for the chests". Compare No. 16:9: "carrying my seals for the storeroom" (NA₄.KIŠIB.MEŠ-ia *ša pi-i É na-kám-ma-te na-šu*), and No. 9:27–29: "on the storeroom roll (*šugarrirā*) my seal for the chests". Also NA₄.KIŠIB *ša pi-i É tup-ni-na-te* No. 9:9 as against NA₄.KIŠIB *ša pi-i* ^{gi8}tup-ni-na-te No. 15:5. For the *laḥmu* see p. 210 with footnote 16.

⁷⁰ Photos and drawing in Moortgat 1942, 61; Weidner 1959–60, 35; Freydank 1974c, Tafel 1.

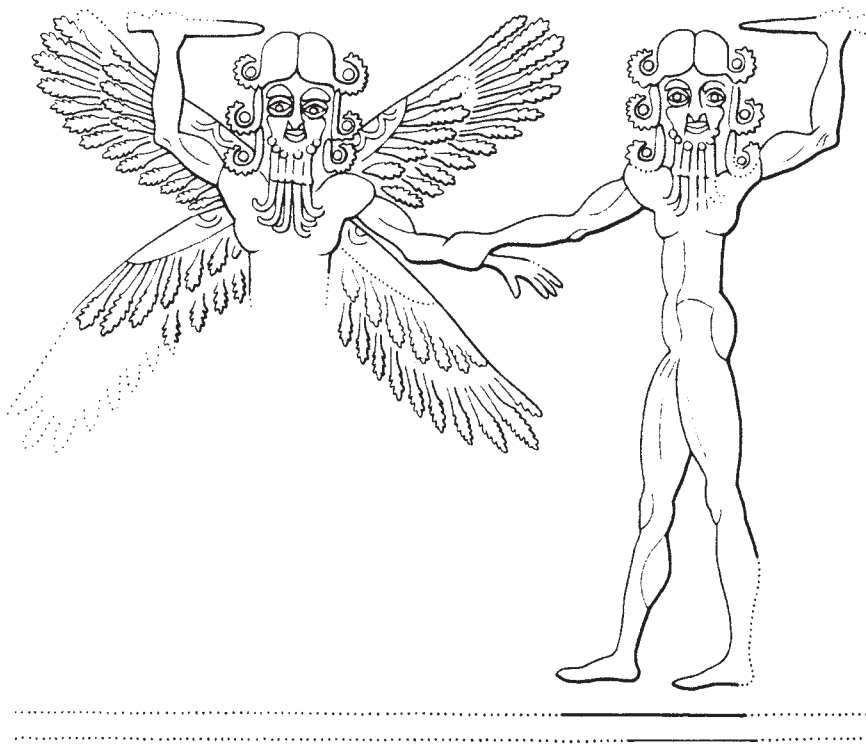


Figure 4.13. Babu-aḥa-iddina's *laḥmu* seal on VAT 12993. © Barbara Feller/Helga Kosak.

(Figure 4.14).⁷¹ This must, with Freydank 1974c (and Röllig 1980, 115), be the “seal of the bull” (NA₄.KIŠIB *ša ri-me*) mentioned by Babu-aḥa-iddina after the other two seals in No. 5. We therefore appear to have three of his seals mentioned in the letters, two of them identifiable from fragments of letter envelopes.

These letters make it clear that Babu-aḥa-iddina expected his staff to have and use their own seals. No doubt, like him, they sealed envelopes encasing letters they sent, and they are often instructed to apply their seals to textiles (Nos. 6:20–1; 11:21; 12: rev. 3–5), or to a package which might contain his seal or seals (e.g. No. 6:38–9), or goods such as alum (No. 16:20–2) or ivory (No. 10:9). The letters we have never suggest that members of staff

⁷¹ This was first reported by Moortgat: “Siegel des Baba-aḥa-iddina ... So E. F. Weidner, der die hier nicht widergegebene Legende gelesen hat” (1942, 81), although Weidner himself does not report this. In the new drawing reproduced as Figure 4.14, his father's name is clearly present in the second line which reads A ĪGÁL'-DINGIR “son of Ibašši-ilu”, and the traces shown in the first line must surely belong to his own name (reading perhaps KIŠIB 'KÁ-ŠEŠ'-SUM' – so also H. Freydank, pers. comm.).

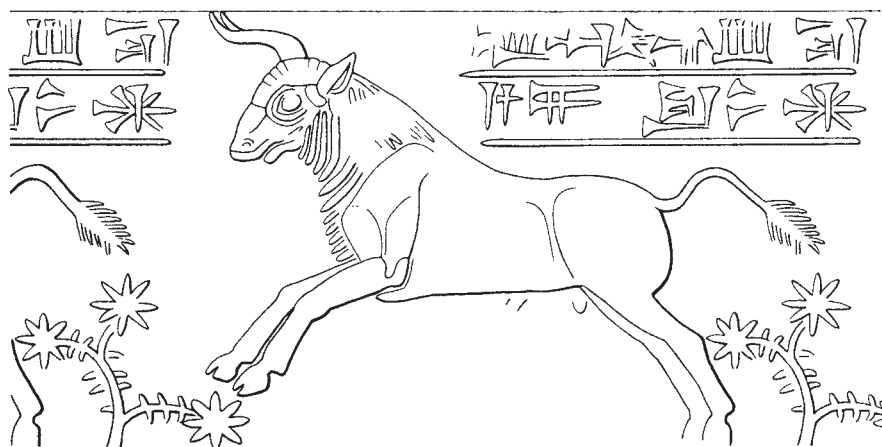


Figure 4.14. Babu-aḫa-iddina's bull seal on VAT 8024. © Barbara Feller/Helga Kosak.

would apply their own seals to either the chests or the storerooms of the household: these they are instructed to seal with one of Babu-aḫa-iddina's own seals, not their own. The chest (*tupninu*) to be sealed by them in No. 8 is one which was specially sent for the purpose and is to be sent back in the care of Uballissu-Marduk who brought it.

Documentary Practice

Sealing is of course one of the criteria by which different kinds of document can be distinguished. Some, if not all, letters were enclosed in a sealed envelope as we have already seen, and this is readily comprehensible and can be paralleled at other times and places in Mesopotamia. The Middle Assyrian practice has been thoroughly discussed by Cancik-Kirschbaum (1996). As for the other texts in the archive, earlier publications only rarely give explicit information about the presence or absence of seal impressions, but this is compensated for partially by observations in Freydank and Saporetti's edition.

Bilateral Documents

Under Group III are listed those tablets which appear from their formulation to have been bilateral texts, and in some cases the editions in Freydank and Saporetti (1989) confirm that they were sealed (Nos. 30; 39; 40), while in other cases the text itself mentions the seal. As

noted previously, these relatively uncommon bilateral documents fall into distinct categories. Most of them may be considered work contracts, and share the feature that the owner of the commodity is represented in the transaction by a subordinate to whom it is entrusted, using the phrase *ša qāt* – literally “in the hand of PN”. This phrase is typically found in these contracts, and not in the letters: there, as we have seen, commodities are often described as “under the responsibility of” (*ina pitti*) PN, not a phrase current in the legal diction; the difference may be one of phraseology and not of substance. Thus Libur-zanin-Aššur is the “owner” of grain handed out on the same day from “the hand of” a subordinate called Ubru to a bird feeder “for the birds’ rations” (No. 39) and to an *alahḫinu* “for grinding” (No. 40); his subordinate in a similar transaction 3 months later is Aššur-zuqpanni, a well-known member of the household staff and possibly at this time the house supervisor. The transactions are formalised, with the recipient sealing the tablet, and with the regular repayment clause in No. 40: “He will grind (it) and deliver (it), and may break his tablet”. Libur-zanin-Aššur’s role remains obscure, but in No. 37 the situation is clearer, because Aššur-zuqpanni is here acting on behalf of Babu-aḥa-iddina and issuing five “fine sieves” (^{gis}*maḫ-lu-lu ra-qu-tu*); the conditions the borrower, Aššur-muṣabši has to fulfil are lost, but again once they are fulfilled, “he may break his tablet”. In Nos. 32–5 (and perhaps No. 38), Kidin-Gula is Babu-aḥa-iddina’s agent making similar issues of materials – grindstones in Nos. 32 and 34, with the tablet to be broken on their return. The borrower in No. 32 is Šamaš-tapputi, whose mention in the field price text No. 36 suggests he had a connection with the family, while in No. 34 (year 11) it is in fact Ma’nayu, later the leading figure among the household staff but here clearly in a more junior capacity. The remaining texts of this type are in poorer condition but broadly similar, as far as can be judged. Although within a private household, these informal, bilateral documents precisely resemble similar transactions in the public organisations, such as the Stewards’ Archive. Not only are they not witnessed, but on the whole they do not have a clause specifying the time and nature of (re)payment, which would be unusual in the private sector, and there is no mention of interest (because of course these are not loans of the relevant type).

Two of the bilateral documents, Nos. 31 and 36, are distinct from the rest. Although separated by about six years, they are both concerned with amounts of lead which constitute the purchase price of land which Babu-aḥa-iddina is buying in a village outside Aššur (and perhaps near Kilizu). The earlier of the two, No. 31, is a debt note sealed by Babu-aḥa-iddina for 80 talents of lead “price of their field [in the] village of Quabe”. The sellers are Kurbanu and his uncle Nabu-kette; the arrangements for payment are lost, but once made “he may break his tablet”. The fact that the tablet is in Babu-aḥa-iddina’s own archive suggests that he did repay, but did not in fact break the tablet. In No. 36, the situation seems to have moved on, because it is Nabu-kette who seals the tablet to acknowledge a liability; the details are obscure, but that this tablet is not out of context is confirmed by the fact that two of the witnesses are very familiar: Ma’nayu son of Gangiya and Mušallim-Aššur son of Ḫaburraru.

As with these witnesses, the fathers, and indeed in No. 31 the grandfathers, of the principals are named, and the sealing of the tablet in front of witnesses is evidence that this was a formal document drawn up in accordance with public legal conventions, unlike the other

bilateral texts here, which are normally unwitnessed and involve people whose filiation is not needed. This underlines the fact that they are part of the regular day-to-day administration of the household, required to keep the establishment up and running smoothly. Nevertheless, the system apparently demanded that a record was kept of some internal transfers, with the liability acknowledged by a seal impression. Indeed, we can recognise this category in one of Babu-aḫa-iddina's letters to two members of his Aššur staff: after explaining that Mušallim-Aššur and Ma'nayu should retrieve some house sale tablets from his bedroom, he writes: "Give them to Ma'nayu, draw up his tablet. Mušallim-Aššur should take the tablet which you draw up and bring (it) to me" (No. 14:16–20). The phrase used by him, *tuppa šabātu*, is the technical term which refers to drawing up a sealed tablet, and we may guess that it would have been one of the less formal sealed bilateral documents of the kind we have here.

Memoranda

In other contexts in his letters Babu-aḫa-iddina instructs his staff to make a written report of their activities, but he does not specify that this should be a *tuppu šabittu*, and the chances are that if we had one of these tablets it would fall into our Group IV. This comprises all the unsealed memoranda and lists. Only in one case (No. 80) do we have the classic Middle Assyrian remark "Written down so as not to forget", and the lack of a date confirms that this was indeed a fairly informal text. By contrast, the majority of these texts are carefully drawn up according to a definite pattern. They are almost all concerned with tracking the fate of a commodity or commodities. The typical memorandum, illustrated here by text No. 57, states:

- [1] the commodity
- [2] (optionally) the purpose
- [3] the recipient
- [4] the action (e.g. "issued")
- [5] the date.

3 MA.NA NA₄-ga-bi-ú
a-na ši-pár GIŠ.GIGIR
ša i+na te-ru-bat Ê^da-šur
a-na LUGAL qar-ru-bat-ni
a-na 'bal-tu-KUR-id
LÚ.AŠGAB ta-din
10 GÍN KI.MIN
a-na^{1,d}30-šal-lim-a-ni
^{lu}a-su-e
a-na Ū.MEŠ-ni
re-ša a-na qa-ú-e
ta-din
ITI ḫi-bur UD.29.KÁM li-mu
^{lu}ul-la-iu-ú

3 minas of alum
for work on the chariot
which, at the induction to the Aššur Temple,
was presented to the king,
were issued to
Bal-tu-kašid, the leather-worker.
10 shekels ditto (=alum)
to Sin-šallimanni,
the doctor,
for preserving
herbs,
were issued.
Month of Ḫibur, 29th day, eponymate
of Lullayū.

By comparison with Group III the most striking feature of such texts is what is not present. On one hand, they are not sealed;⁷² and on the other, they nowhere state the origin or ownership of the commodity: that is taken for granted, and demonstrates that these are essentially unilateral documents written to allow the organisation to track its commodities. There is great variety, both in the nature of the commodity and in the identity of the recipient. Part [4] of a document is usually taken by a verb in the stative, with the commodity as the subject. The commonest verb is *tadānu*, which can often be rendered “handed out, issued”. So for example we have: wine *tadin* (No. 47:6); glue *tadnat/tadnā* (No. 53:6/10; No. 56:4,9); alum *tadin* (No. 57:6,12); copper *tadin* (No. 59:rev.3); textile *tadin* (No. 61:9, 24) or *tadnat* (No. 64:7); textiles *tadnū* (No. 60:4, 13; 63:10), or *tadnā* (No. 62:16); boots *tadnā* (No. 61:21). A variant term is found in No. 71:21 where the copper, after being sealed, “is entrusted” (*paqid*) to Aššur-zuqupanni, the house supervisor, and earlier in this text a copper ingot “is transported” (*šēbul*). Sometimes the procedure is formulated from the point of view of the recipient, thus in No. 55:5 Babu-aḥa-iddina “has received” (*maḥir*) a hamper of ivory and ebony and in No. 61:16 bronze weapons. Giving a slightly different nuance, in No. 61:3,5 Adad-tura (the “tailor”) has “accepted” (*laqi*) two different textiles.

One noticeable feature of some of these memoranda is that they may include more than a single transaction, thus making it clear that they are not concerned with the bilateral relationship, merely documenting events for the organisation’s own internal records. No. 57 has two issues to separate individuals, while No. 61 has seven different issues to a variety of recipients (see Figure 4.15). Perhaps these are grouped together because they all took place on the same day, but unlike many of the internal records of the Offerings House, they do not explicitly state that the events took place on the day to which the tablet is dated. Some of the memoranda give additional, almost narrative, detail about the circumstances: No. 71:13–16 has “1 copper ingot remaining, for disbursal (*ana tal-pitte*) has been carried to Arbail with Babu-aḥa-iddina”, or “when Mušallim-Aššur, Bel-leter, Nabu-bel-da’iq and Adad-tura took the clothing from the chests to Arbail” (No. 62:9–14), while at the end of No. 66, which is concerned with more than 20 garments checked during the annual “airing” (*nupūše*), we read that “they did not extract them from the house of their superiors, they checked them in the house of their superiors. They shall break the [se]al(ing) of Kidin-Gula and the seal of Aššur-zuqupanni, [which] they checked [at] the airing”.

There are also unsurprisingly some even less formal notes, without so much as a date (cf. Nos. 76–87). They may use similar phraseology, for example textile *tadin* (No. 80:6, 11), but they may have no verb at all or may describe the action of individuals, rather than a stage in the life of a commodity.

⁷² None of texts 42 to 87 (Group IV) is known to have been sealed. Although there is always the risk of faint impressions remaining unreported, this is probably correct, because the formulation of the texts on these memoranda differs from the formulae used in Group III where the tablets are known to have been sealed.



Figure 4.15. Memorandum No. 61 from Babu-aḫa-iddina's archive. © John Rylands Library, Manchester.

Conclusions

Babu-aḫa-iddina's correspondence reveals the number of people who may have been involved in the administration of his household, but gives little clue as to the number of menial dependants it may have employed, or may have been resident on Babu-aḫa-iddina's own premises. In a similar situation at Nuzi, the household archive of the king's son Šilwa-Teššup included records of rations issued to a large number of menial dependants, but if this was part of Babu-aḫa-iddina's enterprise we do not have any texts relating to it. Some craftsmen and textileworkers certainly did work for his house, but it is not possible to be certain if any of these were full-time dependants of the household, or were merely retained part time under

an *iškāru* arrangement. Similarly the merchants may have had a long-standing relationship with the household, as reflected in the fact that they may be mentioned in the memoranda without their father's name, but this does not rule out their working for other institutions or persons.

The letters reveal a sophisticated apparatus for the secure handling of commodities, involving formally recognised personal responsibilities and the frequent use of seals to authenticate documentation and secure goods and storerooms. From the memoranda in Group IV it is plain that someone in the household intended to keep track of the commodities it dealt with, whether manufactured items or raw materials. The other texts from the archive show that the organisation made use of documentary controls similar to those used by the palace. Here, as in the state organisations, there was a tradition of internal recording which does not precisely replicate all the formalities used in legal documents to moderate economic relations between one citizen and another, but it may be that the long-standing tradition of written debt notes or contracts provided the model from which the staffs of these large organisations, whether the palace or elite households, adapted some of their practices.

There is no hint in any of the surviving texts that the affairs they record are connected with Babu-aḥa-iddina's public office (whatever it was). The commodities belong to him and are administered on his behalf by persons on his own staff. Undoubtedly his state business must also have generated plenty of scribal activity, and he might have used some of the same staff on it when occasion demanded, but it does seem that the relevant documentation was not stored in the same place as his household's internal administrative archive.

As usual, the persons responsible for creating the archive remain unknown to us. We cannot guess whether most of the tablets were written by people who were primarily scribes (and accountants) working at the behest of a superior, or by members of the staff with executive authority (e.g. the household supervisor) who included scribal and accounting duties within their brief. What seems clear is that it was expected that someone on the staff should keep a record of transactions for the internal purposes of the household. Whether this was principally to be able to account to their superiors (and ultimately to Babu-aḥa-iddina himself) for the proper use of materials under their control, or more constructively to manage information in interests of the efficient administration of the enterprise, monitoring the productive activities and providing a record over time, it is impossible to say.

4.5 | A Family Archive

Babu-aḥa-iddina's texts give a very one-sided view of the activities of an elite household, and to get a better idea of how a family could function at the same time within government and as part of the traditional Aššur community we must turn to another medium-sized archive. This came from a residential house less than 100 metres to the west, and consisted of about 84 tablets which seem likely to have been found in a paved space off the south-east of the central courtyard, adjacent to a main reception room which housed a couple of intramural graves. One of these very texts (No. 50) is a list of the contents of a lumber room elsewhere, in which the household kept, alongside miscellaneous clutter, 24 chests of tablets relating to the family business affairs, and it is obvious that what we have is a mere fraction of the household's complete archives, not only from the sheer numbers but also because they do not include, for instance, any formal land or slave purchases. The majority of our texts do have as a principal player one member of the family, in the person of Urad-Šerua, his father, Melisaḥ, his grandfather Aššur-aḥa-iddina, or in one instance his son Išme-Ninurta, and it is this that entitles us to describe them as a family archive.

With only 84 texts spread over three generations (and at the very least 44 years), and not all of them visibly involving family members, we cannot expect a mass of coherent data to emerge, but this one archive deserves attention because it does at least force us to confront two wider issues: How separate were family affairs and state business, in reality and in perception? And did the family's range of rural connections derive from its private estates or as a result of its tenure of state offices? This second question is best encapsulated in the archive's 18 šulmānu documents. These were a specialised class of formalised debt-notes which recorded the promise of a "gift" (šulmānu) to the creditor in return for an undertaking to "examine his (i.e. the debtor's) case". It is hard to decide in what capacity the creditor held this responsibility for the debtor's affairs, but not only Urad-Šerua but also his father and his grandfather feature as the creditor, so it seems more likely to be associated with the family's private affairs than any one state office. Although the texts give only the vaguest hints as to the subject matter of the cases to be examined, it is notable that the majority of them clearly belong in the countryside. The list of stored tablets in text No. 50 includes some relating to the ownership of country estates, and other texts within the archive and from Tell al-Rimah reinforce the impression that this urban household had enduring rural interests.

On the other hand, a small group of texts from the archive shows Melisaḥ and Urad-Šerua acting without doubt as state officials in the recently annexed upper Ḥabur provinces of north-western Assyria. These particular documents derive from the need for officials in the provinces to provide food and other subsistence allocations (seed corn and ox fodder) to the families of populations deported in the aftermath of Assyrian campaigns in the region. They

make it certain that for a brief period at least Melisaḥ was appointed the provincial governor of Naḥur and that his son was also active on state business in the region, and the texts themselves illustrate the formalities adopted by the civil administration to regulate official liabilities.

Quite why these specific documents from the family's administrative activity in the provinces should have ended up in its Aššur house remains obscure – there must have been many more documents, and we would rather expect that most of them would be kept on location in the provincial palace. Equally hard to explain fully is the presence within the archive of the texts in which no member of the family makes an appearance. Some of these are definitely concerned with state affairs, including prebendary land allocated to government officials in the vicinity of Nineveh, and three texts which appear to be reporting on loans issued to villagers in times of economic hardship. Definite reasons for the presence of such documents – such as a relevant official or professional title betraying the government duties of one of the family members – are hardly to be expected, but they do underline the dual nature of the family's activities, in both private and public spheres.

The Archive

In 1908, in their west-east Suchgraben dA8I (see Figure 4.1), the excavators encountered a collection of about 84 tablets, which were given the number Ass. 14327 and described as unbaked tablets of small and medium format, mostly very well preserved;¹ unusually the excavators failed to report the more precise location of their find.² The building from which the tablets were recovered lies towards the west side of the city, about 100 metres south of the south-west corner of the New Palace of Tukulti-Ninurta I and nearly 100 metres west of the Archive of Babu-aḥa-iddina. The Middle Assyrian building lay beneath Neo-Assyrian houses, 3 metres below the surface of the site. The original floor of the structure lay at 32.25 metres, but there were later Middle Assyrian floor surfaces at 0.6 and 0.9 metres above this. It was not systematically explored beyond the north and south sides of their 10-metre “Suchgraben”. The sector of the house plan which was recorded within square dA8I is shown in Figure 4.16,³ and has a central courtyard (Room 2), flanked along its north-east side by a large reception room (Room 4), which measured 4.4 by 6.8 metres and contained two probably contemporary intramural burials (Ass. 14317 and 14318). To its south-east was Room 7: this was only partially excavated, but Plan 33 indicates a paved surface here at 33.32 metres, which seems to have been exposed by tunnelling into the south side of the Suchgraben. The reason for the tunnel is not recorded, but with Miglus it seems likely that it was dug to recover the full extent of the tablet group Ass. 14327. This can only be a guess, but the tablets are said

¹ “Ungebrannte Tontafeln kleinen und mittleren Formates, zum grossen Teil sehr gut erhalten” (Jordan 1908, 42).

² It is probably not by chance that this coincided with the incomparable Walter Andrae's one period of home leave in the course of the Assur project.

³ A version of the schematic plan, including one further room to the east and one to the west bordering on a “Main Road”, is given in Pedersén 1985, 100, but see Miglus's comment on the lack of evidence for a lane along the north-west side of the building (212⁷³²).



Figure 4.16. Provenance of Ass. 14327. The archive may have come from Room 7. Plan © P. Miglus.

to have been found in the “2. Bearbeitungsschicht”, which is probably consistent with the elevation of the floor here, more than a metre above the original floor. The uncertainty is the more unfortunate because the good condition of the tablets might well indicate that they had remained in a relatively undisturbed context. The contents of the archive suggest that it may have been kept in the personal residence of Urad-Šerua and/or his son Išme-Ninurta, and the excavated remains are compatible with this: if Room 7 was indeed their location, they would have been kept in a room adjacent to the main reception room (Room 4); and their association with a later occupation level is consistent with texts belonging to the third and fourth generations of the family.

Perhaps because of the tablets’ good condition, the great majority of this archive found its way to Berlin, with only some eight pieces now in Istanbul, and quite a large proportion of the Berlin tablets were copied by Ebeling and published in KAJ.⁴ An edition of these texts and most of the previously unpublished Berlin tablets, accompanied by a study of the archive as a whole, was given in Postgate 1988a,⁵ and in the following discussion the numbering of that edition is followed. Taken as a whole, the texts in this archive give us our best evidence for two general themes in the reconstruction of Middle Assyrian society: the relations between the urban elite at Aššur and the countryside, and the role of the family in government administration. It also provides the opportunity to consider how, and indeed whether, the family’s public and private activities can or should be differentiated (see pp. 257–8).

⁴ In detail, sixty-six copies are found in KAJ, two in KAV and two in MARV 1, see Postgate 1988a, and for details of excavation numbers and so forth see Pedersén 1985, 99–106, archive M10. When preparing my edition of this archive I was very generously allowed by Dr Freydank and the museum authorities in Berlin to transcribe and include hitherto unpublished pieces. Dr Freydank’s copies of nine of these are found in MARV 3: 3.11 (No. 60); 3.15 (No. 5); 3.33 (No. 33); 3.56 (No. 7); 3.62 (No. 8); 3.66 (No. 47); 3.74 (No. 76); 3.79 (No. 61); 3.83 (No. 73). Resultant improvements to the texts, especially in the reading of personal names, are noted in the introduction to MARV 3, and in the collations to KAJ texts given in Freydank 2003. Significant progress has also been made (principally in Freydank 1991b and 2005a) with the reconstruction of the eponym sequence in this time span, which allows more accurate statements about chronological aspects of the archive.

⁵ Reviewed by Freydank 1990b, Pedersén 1991b Maidman 1992, and Cole 1993–4 among others.

The Family and the Chronology

At present this is the best example we have of a family archive, in the sense that it includes documents which reflect the activities of members of the same family over at least four generations. The dated tablets come from 44 different eponym years, but they must be spread over more than this absolute minimum, because they do not form an unbroken sequence: by comparison with the eponym sequence elicited from the Durkatlimmu texts for the latter half of Shalmaneser's and the first half of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign it emerges that at least 13 further years (of eponyms not attested in the archive but known to belong within its time span) need to be inserted, making a bare minimum of 57 years.⁶ In the majority of the texts, one or more members of a single family acts as a principal (see the family tree, Table 4.14). Aššur-aḥa-iddina from the first active generation is encountered in 15 texts, at least three of which, one related to a house purchase, date to the reign of Adad-nirari I, and three to the reign of Shalmaneser.⁷ His son Melisaḥ is a principal in 13 texts, with Marat-batka, his wife, in two (Nos. 3 and 16), three of these texts certainly dating to the reign of Shalmaneser (Nos. 9; 27; 32). Melisaḥ's son Urad-Šerua is a principal in 19 texts, with his wife in one (No. 48); of these eight (Nos. 17; 18; 37; 38; 40; 44; 46; 50) date to the reign of Shalmaneser,⁸ and at least five to Tukulti-Ninurta I.⁹ Finally, from the fourth generation, Urad-Šerua's son Išme-Ninurta features in a single text from the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta (No. 49). Perhaps we may also include within the core family Aššur-bel-ilani: he, like Urad-Šerua's wife mentioned (anonymously) in No. 48, had Ittabši-den-Aššur as a father, and is the principal in texts Nos. 57–9, but these refer to him as the governor of the City of Aššur, and it is by no means obvious why these three texts in particular, from the multitude in which he must have been involved, should have ended up in Urad-Šerua's house.

In any case, the way the documentation is spread so thinly across more than half a century plainly indicates that we can only have here a small fraction of what originally existed. Yet there are indications that it still represents a group of documents with some internal coherence reflecting the collective activities of the main family. Aššur-aḥa-iddina's activities overlap in time with Melisaḥ's, because there are cases where their texts come from the same eponym year,¹⁰ and in No. 34 we find both Melisaḥ and his son Urad-Šerua engaged in different stages of the same transaction. Furthermore, the presence in this archive of 18 *šulmānu* documents recording these similar and rather distinctive transactions over three generations

⁶ This follows from a comparison of the reconstructed eponym sequence in Freydank 2005a, 49–50 with the list of Urad-Šerua's eponyms in Freydank 2005a, 54 showing seventeen of the eponyms unrepresented, reduced by four of the eponyms from the sequence who are attested in other texts in Ass. 14327 (Nos. 51; 61; 70; 71).

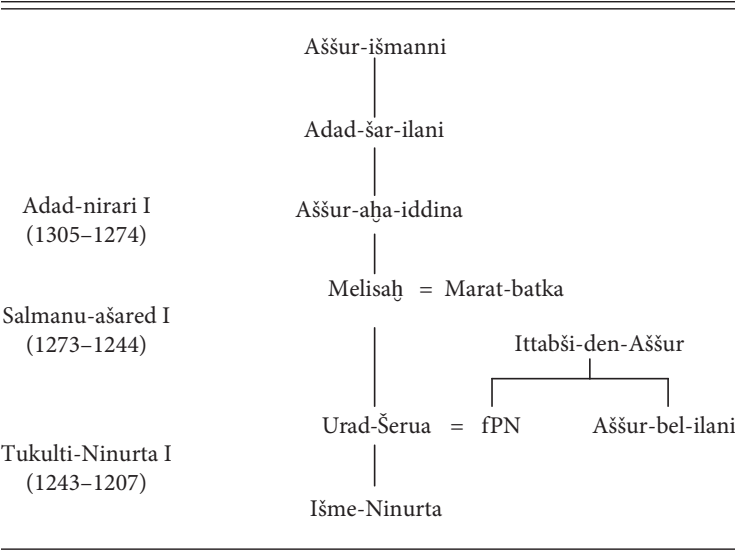
⁷ Nos. 11 (a *šulmānu* contract with a resident of Šarika), 19 (receipt of house price) and 25 (uncertain content) belong in the reign of Adad-nirari I; see also Freydank 2005a, 53.

⁸ Here as elsewhere the assignations to reign of Freydank (1991d, 189–92) are tacitly accepted, except where more recent information (e.g. from Durkatlimmu) allows greater precision as set out in Freydank 2005a.

⁹ Nos. 39 (Šunu-qardu), 41 (Aššur-nadin-apli), 42 (Mušallim-Adad), 45 (Adad-bel-gabbe) and 48 (Aššur-da'an) are dated by eponyms assigned to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta (Freydank 2005a, 49–50).

¹⁰ Texts 8 and 9; 21 and 27; 22 and 34; 20 and 26, 30, 31; see Freydank 2005a, 53.

Table 4.14. Ass. 14327 family tree¹¹



(see pp. 248–52) cannot be coincidental, and shows that the composition of the archive is not entirely random.¹²

Text No. 50: A Second Family Archive

Before describing the contents of the texts included in Ass. 14327, it will help to mention another, surely much larger, family archive whose existence is recorded for us by text No. 50, belonging to the time of Urad-Šerua. This is an inventory of items “which are deposited in the lower storeroom of the *šahūru* building” (ll. 64–6). These include a chariot and chariot components, miscellaneous pieces of furniture and wooden and metal items, but also a section summarised as “Total: 24 hampers of tablets”. The terminology used to describe the different types of document stored in these hampers¹³ is so revealing that I make no apology for quoting it extensively once more.¹⁴

¹¹ Dates after Jakob 2003, 571, following Freydank 1991d, 188–9; for the choice of the earlier range, cf. Appendix 1.
¹² M. P. Maidman, in his review of my edition, is rather dismissive of the value of this archive as a basis for reconstructing Middle Assyrian conditions, comparing it unfavourably with the situation at Nuzi. In his words, “the paltry amount of this material alone would prevent the historian from attempting a reconstruction of so large a phenomenon as the social/administrative life of the Middle Assyrian state” (1992, 160). In response, one may readily agree that more, and more coherent, documents would be better, and concede the superiority of some of the Nuzi archives, but it seems rather defeatist not at least to suggest reconstructions which provide possible explanations for the documentation we do have. There is no denying that this one archive sheds light only on a restricted range of issues, but where light is thrown it would be a shame not to exploit it as a contribution to the larger picture. It is partly on account of these understandable reservations that some of the issues addressed in this chapter are discussed in rather pedestrian detail.
¹³ Most of the containers are “chests” or “hampers” (*quppu*, presumably of wood or reed), but four are called *marsattu*, which is etymologically a “soaking vessel” and so probably a pottery jar of some description; I translate “vat”.
¹⁴ A previous description also in Postgate 2003a, 128–9.

- Documents relating to the acquisition of property
- “Proclamations of the herald for houses in the Inner City (=Aššur)” (*sasu nāgiri ša É.MEŠ ša ^{uru}lib-bi URU*, l. 20); and
- “Clearance(s) of people and fields of the town of Šarika” (*tazkīte ša ÉRIN.MEŠ u A.ŠÀ.MEŠ ša ^{uru}Šarika*, ll. 11–12).
- Another chest had tablets in some way associated with the city of Karana, but the subject of these transactions is lost (l. 16).
- Debt-notes from named individuals: *ša UGU PN* “of (obligations) on PN”

The debtors are named as follows, and their names are found in the other Ass. 14327 tablets as indicated; 100 per cent certainty that these are the same people is not possible because filiations are not given in No. 50, but it seems likely in most cases: Šamaš-ereš (l. 11; witness in No. 21), Aššur-la-taḥaṭṭi (l. 13), Aššur-mušaḇši (l. 15; as witness and scribe, Nos. 18; 22; 28; 40; 43'), Ištār-ereš (l. 16; son of Aššur-šuma-ušur, as witness and scribe, Nos. 36; 40), Riš-Adad (l. 19; if son of Remanni-Adad, witness and scribe, Nos. 27; 30; 49; or if son of [...]–Aššur, witness and scribe, No. 14) and Uqa-den-ili' (l. 29; witness No. 28, son of Aššur-šuma-ušur, so quite likely brother of Ištār-ereš).

- “A vat of tablets of Riš-Adad”: *marsattu ša tuppâte ša Riš-Adad*, and a chest “of case-tablets of Riš-Adad”: *ša kiṣrâte ša Riš-Adad* (ll. 27–8). There is also a chest of his ordinary debt-notes (l. 19).
- “A vat of tablets of [PN], the cup-bearer” (*marsattu ša tuppâte ša [PN] ^{lu}šāqie*, ll. 32–3).
- Debt-notes from “Assyrians”. These must have been numerous because they have been sorted into different chests on the basis of the items owed:

<i>ša alpē u emārē ša UGU aššurāyē</i>	“of oxen and asses owed by Assyrians” (ll. 17–18)
<i>ša immerē ša UGU aššurāyē</i>	“of sheep owed by Assyrians” (l. 21)
<i>ša ŠE-am ša UGU aššurāyē</i>	“of grain owed by Assyrians” (l. 22)
<i>ša KÛ.BABBAR sammuḥi ša UGU aššurāyē</i>	“of mixed silver owed by Assyrians” (l. 23).

There is also a chest of “expropriated tablets of (obligations) on Assyrians” (*tuppâte pa'ugâte ša UGU aššurāyē*, l. 14).

- Debt-notes from craftsmen (*ša UGU ēpiš šipri*, l. 17).
- Debt-notes from shepherds for [sheep?] and donkeys ([*ša ...*] *u emārē ša UGU rā'iyē*, l. 24).
- “Tablets of the Palace of (obligations) on the horse-trainer” (*tuppâte ša É.GAL-lim ša UGU ^{lu}susāni*, ll. 26–7).
- Two chests containing textile items called *kuddili*. Their nature is obscure; perhaps they were some form of packaging for tablets, but the details of the tablets in question remain uncertain because of damage (ll. 33–6).
- A container (*tallu*) of Arzuḥina workmanship “(of) Mannu-gir-[...] and his brothers and Sin-šeya” (ll. 30–1). To judge from Babylonian and Nuzi attestations, the *tallu* was probably a pottery vessel (CAD T, 101–2).
- A vat and possibly another container of documents described as *ugurâte*, a term whose precise meaning is not known, but which must, like NA *egirtu*, be connected with the verb *egāru* occasionally found in Middle Assyrian meaning “to write” (l. 37).

- The scribe gives a “Total 24 chests of tablets” (ŠU.NÍGIN 24 *qu-pa-tu ša tup-pa-te*^{meš}), although not all the containers were *quppu*, and in fact there seem to be at least 25 if not 26 containers listed.

It would of course be quite mistaken to see this list as a complete inventory of the household’s records. Few of the items with which the 24(?) tablet containers shared the storeroom are of high value except perhaps the chariot – there are no textiles or precious metalwork – and although we do not know what kind of building or where the *šahūru* was, it may well not have been part of or even adjacent to the family’s main residence. In all probability there would have been one or more storerooms there too, and of course if it was the building in dA8I, the archive we now have was kept there. Probably these chests are back files which the family chose not to discard, but equally did not expect to consult frequently, but they may provide a valuable complement, if not corrective, to the impression received from the Ass. 14327 tablets.

Most of the documents listed seem to relate to the family’s private enterprises, but as with Ass. 14327 this is not exclusive, because there is one chest of the palace’s debt-notes from a horse trainer, and there may also be documents which belonged to individuals not known to us as family members (Riś-Adad, and the cup bearer whose name is lost), although this may just reflect our ignorance. Without further detail we cannot judge whether the debt-notes from craftsmen related to private or to public activities, though private seems more plausible. The Ass. 14327 texts include contracts with a leather worker (No. 24), a carpenter (No. 31), a metal worker (No. 67) and a brick maker (No. 48), among others. Striking are the four or five chests of debt-notes from “Assyrians”. The mere fact that they have been sorted into different containers on the basis of the subject of the debts seems to indicate that there was a large number. Whether we can recognise any such documents in Ass. 14327 depends on the significance of the term *Assyrian*, which is difficult to determine. If on one hand it refers to residents of the city of Aššur we might be surprised at the range of agricultural debts in the shape of animals and grain; on the other hand if it means Assyrian in the sense of any indigenous citizen of the Assyrian state, it does not seem to be a very precise designation in this context. This is not the place to resolve the issue.¹⁵ As we shall see later in this section, as well as probable prosopographical connections, the tablets in these 24(?) chests and jars make reference to place names which have associations in the other Ass. 14327 texts, and confirm the assumption, based on the information that the chariot in l. 1 was received by Urad-Šerua, that the contents of the storeroom (including the tablets) belong to the family.

Documents Not Mentioning a Family Member

Urad-Šerua is listed among other highly placed persons in No. 74, although he is not there a principal so that there is no obvious reason the tablet should be found in his house. There are also in Ass. 14327 at least 22 tablets which apparently do not mention any member of the family. At first sight it might seem unwise to assume any connection between these and the

¹⁵ See Chapter 2 on the term *Assyrian*.

rest of the group, but the contents and nature of most of these texts sit well with the remainder of the archive, and it would equally be unjustified to ignore them. Many cuneiform archives have had to be reconstructed entirely from the internal evidence of the inscribed texts because their archaeological context has been lost. Although the circumstances of discovery of Ass. 14327 are not as precisely reported as usual, there is a presumption with the Aššur excavations that tablets with the same Ass. number were found together, and although we cannot assume *a priori* that they constitute a coherent archive, we must examine them to see how or why apparently unrelated documents were in association. As a whole these non-family texts make a haphazard collection, but a few pairs are linked by date and content (Nos. 57 and 58; 63 and 64; 65 and 66; 71 and 72), helpfully confirming that such texts are not completely random and that the tablets must be present in the archive for a reason, even if it is not obvious to us.¹⁶ They fall, broadly, into two categories – bilateral documents which do not involve any of the nuclear family, and administrative texts where the names of the responsible officials either were not mentioned at all or are lost in breaks. With the bilateral texts the case of Ittabši-den-Aššur in Nos. 57–9 has already been mentioned, but in other cases we are in no position to know if the texts were in the house because of a more remote family connection or for some other reason. Some of the administrative texts are clearly to do with government affairs, including military recruitment and supply, and land allocations, and all these can do is to suggest that the family and its associates were involved in public administration.

The Family's Public Role

One of the principal values of this archive is that it gives us a glimpse of the role of elite families in the administration of the Assyrian state. Unfortunately, much of the evidence is ambivalent at times, and may permit different interpretations. To explore the grey area of the intersection of public and private activities it may help to start from one part of the archive which is undeniably public. This is a pair of texts concerned with the distribution of grain to deportees in the region of the upper Ḫabur (Nos. 34–5), associated with the provincial capitals of Naḫur, Šuduḫū, Amasaku and Taidu. The obvious relationship of this group of texts to the historically attested Assyrian annexation of parts of the kingdom of Ḫanigalbat means that they have been discussed several times in recent decades and the connections do not need to be revisited here.¹⁷ A verbatim quote will give the clearest picture of the nature of these documents:

¹⁶ That it is reasonable to treat such texts together with the more definite remainder of the archive is agreed, for instance, by Cole: “The author has made the reasonable assumption that the principals in these documents must have lived or worked in close association with the family” (1993–4, 118). Note, however, that Nos. 54 and 55 are later than any of the tablets mentioning family members, being after the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta (as noted by Freydank 2005a, 55; No. 55 is from the eponymate of Aššur-nirari III, that is his accession year, 1202 BC).

¹⁷ For example Saporetti 1970b; Harrak 1987; Galter 1988.

No. 34 (KAJ 109)

KIŠIB *ki-din*–[^d*sîn*]

Seal of Kidin-[Sin].

(space for seal impression)

360 [(+x) AN]ŠE 2³ *qa* ŠE
i-na GIŠ.BÁN SUMUN *ša* É.GAL-*lim*
ša KA 13 *le-a-ni*
ša ÉRIN.MEŠ *na-áš-ḫu*–<*tu*>
ša ^{uru}*šu-du-ḫi a-na* NUMUN
 ŠUKU-*at* GU₄.MEŠ-*šu-nu* ù ŠUKU-*šu-nu*
i-na ^{uru}*na-ḫur i-na* ŠU ¹*me-li-saḫ*
 DUMU ^a*a-šur*–ŠEŠ–SUM-*na*
 EN *pa-ḫi-ti* *ša* ^{uru}*na-ḫur*
im-ḫu-ru-ni
^{1.d}UTU-ŠEŠ–SUM-*na*
^{lu}*qe-pu*
ša LUGAL
i-na ŠU ¹İR–^d*še-ru-a*
 DUMU *me-li-saḫ i-na* ^{uru}*na-ḫur*
im-ta-ḫar
a-na ¹*ki-din*–^d*sîn* DUMU ^dIM–*te-ia*
 EN *pa-ḫe-te* *ša* ^{uru}*šu-du-ḫi*
a-na *ša-ad-du-ni*
it-ti-din
 ITI *ša ke-na-te* UD.23.[KÁM]
li-mu ¹*mu-šal-lim*–^a*a-šur*

360.02 homers of grain (measured)
 by the old *sūtu*, belonging to the palace,
 in accordance with 13 writing-boards
 which the deported people
 of Šuduḫu received for seed(-corn),
 rations of their oxen, and their (own) rations
 in Naḫur, from the charge of Melisaḫ,
 son of Aššur-aḫa-iddina,
 Governor of Naḫur,

Šamaš-aḫa-iddina,
 the representative of the king
 has received
 from the charge of Urad-Šerua,
 son of Melisaḫ, in Naḫur.

To Kidin-Sin, son of Adad-teya,
 Governor of Šuduḫu,
 for distribution
he has given (it).
 Month of Ša-kenate, 23rd day,
 eponymate of Mušallim-Aššur.

The essence of this transaction is as follows: Kidin-Sin is the governor of Šuduḫu, and he has sealed this tablet to acknowledge receipt of about 36 metric tonnes of grain, which he is to distribute to the deportees of Šuduḫu. The grain is entrusted to him by a royal agent (*qēpu ša šarri*) called Šamaš-aḫa-iddina, who had himself received it in Naḫur from Urad-Šerua. In ll. 4–11 it is explained that the amount of grain is specified in 13 writing-boards which the deportees of Šuduḫu received in Naḫur from Melisaḫ, the governor of Naḫur. Presumably this tablet was brought back to Urad-Šerua by Šamaš-aḫa-iddina as evidence that he had correctly delivered the grain to its destination.

Instant understanding of what is happening here is made difficult by the ambiguity of the phrase “deportees of Šuduḫu”: Does this mean people moved *from* there, or *to* there? In 1988, I wrote that it seemed unlikely that they were being deported to Šuduḫu, but now this seems to be not only possible but preferable.¹⁸ The deportees are receiving the grain not just as rations for themselves, but as seed corn and ox fodder to allow them to start farming, and this is very comparable to the grain issues to Elamite families at Tell Chuera.¹⁹ We can therefore easily imagine that these people had passed through Naḫur on the way to Šuduḫu, where land had been allocated for them to cultivate, and that while at Naḫur their details had

¹⁸ As favoured by Freydank (1997a, 140²⁹).

¹⁹ See pp. 287–9 on Tell Chuera; and Jakob 2003, 122³² for similar texts from Durkatlimmu. Note that similar detailed lists of deportee families are known from Aššur (Ass. 10990ff. – see Freydank 1997a, 137²⁴ for a preliminary notice of these texts). See also Nos. 57–8, in which Aššur-bel-ilani as governor of Aššur is involved in issuing grain rations to Kassite deportees.

been recorded on writing-boards under the supervision of the governor, Melisaḥ. The grain itself was issued at Naḥur from government stocks controlled by (*ina qāt*) Urad-Šerua, no doubt acting on behalf of his father, Melisaḥ, who was presumably not present in Naḥur at the time.

Before sketching the implications of this for the role of the family, it will help to look at another of the documents:

No. 35 (KAJ 113)

(space for seal impression)

716 ANŠE 3BÁN ŠE

i-na GIŠ.BÁN *ša É ḫi-bur-ni*

ša É.GAL-lim

ša ^{uru}*a-ma-sa-ki*

ša i-na li-me ¹[*a-b*]-DINGIR

DUMU ^d*a-šur-MU-[le]-šir*

^{1,d}*be-er-MU-le-šir* DUMU *e-tel-pi-d*taš-*[me-te]*

^{lu}*qe-pu ša* LUGAL

ip-šu-ru-ú-ni

210 ANŠE 6BÁN 4 *qa* ŠE *i-na* GIŠ.BÁN SUMUN

ša É.GAL-lim

ša ^{uru}*a-ma-sa-ki*

ša i-na li-me

^{1,d}*a-šur-a-lik-pa-ni*

¹*ub-ri* DUMU ^d*a-š[ur-mu-KAR]*

^{lu}*qe-pu* [()]

ša LUGAL *ip-šu^r-r[u^r-ni]*

ŠU.NIGIN 926 ANŠE 9BÁN 4 *qa* ŠE

i-na GIŠ.BÁN *ša É ḫi-bur-ni*

ša É.GAL-lim ša ^{uru}*a-ma-sa-ki*

ša i-na a-bat LUGAL

^{1,d}*be-er-MU-le-šir*

DUMU *e-tel-pi-i-d*taš-*me-te*

^u*ub-ri* DUMU ^d*a-šur-mu-KAR*

^{lu}*qe-pu*

ša LUGAL *a-na ÉRIN.MEŠ na-áš-ḫu-te*

ša ^{uru}*na-ḫur i-di-nu-ni*

a-na ^{1,d}*a-šur-ki-te-i-de*

DUMU ^{1,d}*a-šur-LUGAL-DINGIR.MEŠ-[ni]*

EN *pa-ḫi-te ša* ^{uru}*na-ḫur*

[*a-na š*]*a-du-ú-ni ta-din*

[ŠE *an-ni-ú ša pi-i* 5 *le-a-ni*

[*ša* ^{1,d}*be-er-SUM-na* ^{lu}*qe-pu*

[*ša* LU] GAL *i-na* ŠU ¹İR-^d*še-ru-a*

[DU] MU *mi-li-saḥ* [*i*]*m-ḫu-ru-ni*

716.3 homers of grain

(measured) by the *sūtu* of the *ḫiburnu* house,

belonging to the palace

of Amasaki

which, in the eponymate of Abi-ili,

son of Aššur-šumu-lešer,

Ber-šumu-lešer, son of Etel-pi-Tašmete,

the representative of the king,

withdrew;

210.64 homers of grain by the old *sūtu*,

belonging to the palace

of Amasaki,

which, in the eponymate of

Aššur-alik-pani,

Ubri, son of Ašš[ur-muše]zib,

the representative

of the king withd[rew];

Total: 926.94 homers of grain

by the *sūtu* of the *ḫiburnu* house,

belonging to the palace of Amasaki,

which on the order of the king

Ber-šumu-lešer,

son of Etel-pi-Tašmete,

and Ubri, son of Aššur-muše]zib,

the representative(s)

of the king gave to the deported people

of Naḥur,

was given to Aššur-ketti-ide

son of Aššur-šar-ilani,

Governor of Naḥur,

[for dis]tribution.

This [grain] (is) in accordance with 5

writing-boards [which Be]r-iddina, the

representative of the king, received from the

charge of Urad-Šerua, son of Milisaḥ,

a-na ^{1.d}*a-šur-ki-[te-(i)]-de i-di-nu-ni*
 ITI *ša ke-na-te* UD.21.KÁM
li-mu ¹*mu-šal-lim-^da-šur*

(and) gave to Aššur-ketti-ide.
 Month Ša-kenate, 21st day,
 eponymate of Mušallim-Aššur.

This document was written only 2 days earlier, but it seems to be dealing with past history, because it reports on withdrawals of grain from the palace at Amasaku by different royal representatives on two separate occasions in previous years. The grain was destined for the deportees of Naḥur, and by analogy with No. 34, they were no doubt being settled within the territory of the province. As in No. 34, it is the governor of the province who is entrusted with the grain by the representatives, and we learn that in the two earlier years, the eponymates of Abi-ili and Aššur-alik-pani, the governor was Aššur-ketti-ide. The awkward fact is that in No. 34, written just two days later, we read that now Melisaḥ is the governor of Naḥur. One possible explanation is that both these documents were written in connection with a transfer of the governorship from Aššur-ketti-ide to Melisaḥ: certainly No. 35, from the way it records long-completed transactions, seems to document outstanding liabilities rather than current events, and it is not a very formal document because it has no witnesses and lacks an introductory caption identifying the seal owner. It does, all the same, confirm that alongside his father Urad-Šerua had a significant role to play in the Assyrian administration at this time, whoever may have been governor of Naḥur on the day in question. Whether at this time or later Urad-Šerua himself ever held the post of governor (*bēl pāḥiti*) in one of these Ḥabur provincial capitals is something our texts do not tell us, but it is at least clear that he was in a position of administrative responsibility while his father was nominally the governor of Naḥur.

In general, from Nos. 34 and 35 we recover a coherent picture. We see that in two at least of the provincial capitals (Šuduḫu and Naḥur) the governor is responsible for issuing large quantities of grain to deportees who are being settled on land which they are expected to plough and sow. The documents we have were written because the grain had required moving from one city to another, in No. 34 from Naḥur to Šuduḫu, and in No. 35 from Amasaku to Naḥur, and we learn that the task of transportation was entrusted to royal aides, literally “representatives of the king”, who had been delegated the authority to mediate between equal-ranking provincial governors.²⁰ From Nos. 34 and 35 we also learn that the detailed justification for these large volumes of grain had been described on a number of writing-boards: plainly, the amount required by each provincial governor had been assessed in advance by listing the deported families, with their seed corn and fodder requirements and the length of time for which they needed rations, and the governor was expected to ensure that the distribution was made in accordance with these lists. That this is indeed how the administration proceeded is confirmed by just such a detailed list from about the same time recovered from Tell Chuera. Here we see how the individual requirements of each family are estimated so as to give the total needed for a given length of time, although because the numbers are smaller

²⁰ Another instance of such a transfer is No. 29, where “at the command of the king” the governor of Ta’idu supplies grain for the Naḥur deportees; royal representatives are again involved, and the recipient is almost certainly Melisaḥ, with, perhaps, “the son of Melisaḥ”; the date is unfortunately lost.

the necessary information could be recorded on an ordinary clay tablet rather than a wooden writing-board.²¹

These documents are not the only ones which illustrate the activities of our family in the Ḫabur region, but they are some of the few unequivocal instances where we can be certain they are acting as officials on behalf of the state. Another unambiguous case is No. 26, where the 40 bales of straw “belonging to the palace” and “in the charge (*ša qāt*) of Melisaḥ” are issued “on the instructions of” (*ana šipirte*) the steward of the House of Sikku (see p. 258). Urad-Šerua was certainly engaged at times in administering manpower for the state: No. 44 lists four soldiers “deficit of the army-units” (LÁ.MEŠ *ša ḫuradāte*), and No. 46 details three other men, who were all “in the charge of Urad-Šerua”, while his involvement in the provision of human resources for the state is confirmed by No. 45 which lists six men and three women who were listed on different writing-boards and are being entrusted to him in Aššur for return to their units. In other cases, where there is no explicit mention of the palace as owner, or the phrase “in the charge of” (*ša qāt*) is not used, we cannot assume they are acting on behalf of the state rather than in a private capacity, although it is not ruled out.²²

Countryside Connections: The *šulmānu* Texts

A decision on this point is often difficult because it is certain from other documents that the family had a variety of long-standing social and economic links with the countryside. This is well illustrated by Texts 1–18, which are probably all *šulmānu* contracts.²³ Middle Assyrian *šulmānu* contracts in general were discussed by Koschaker and Finkelstein,²⁴ and those in the Urad-Šerua Archive in Postgate 1988a, xiii–xvi. Succinctly, they are a specialised form of debt-note, recording a commitment from one party to make a payment to the creditor in recognition of the fact that a matter had been dealt with by the creditor. As creditor eight of the texts have Aššur-aḫa-iddina, eight have Melisaḥ and his wife and only two have Urad-Šerua. Presumably the tablets from the time of his father and grandfather are still present in Urad-Šerua’s house because the liability they documented was never paid off. This of course hints that they may only be a small residual fraction of the total.

Two versions of the deal can be distinguished. In one, which may be called a “prospective *šulmānu* contract”, the obligation on the debtor will only exist once the matter has been dealt with.

²¹ This summary agrees substantially with the account of these transactions offered by Jakob (2003, 121–3). He notes there that Freydank has a rather different interpretation of these texts both in respect of the function of the writing boards and in relation to the meaning of *pašāru* (Freydank 1997a, 136–7). However, à propos Freydank’s comment on my interpretation of KAJ 106 [by which I think he means my note on KAJ 109, 1988a, 70], I would agree with him now that the thirteen writing boards were not given to the deportees themselves.

²² For comment on this uncertainty, and the possibility of some inconsistency on the part of the scribes, see Jakob 2009, 16^{151–2}.

²³ “Probably” because the broken state of Nos. 7 and 8 makes their identity as *šulmānu* contracts hypothetical, although probable.

²⁴ Cf. Jakob 2003, 52–3.

[KIŠI]B ⁴IM-*mu*-SIG₅ // KI[ŠIB ¹DINGIR-*sa-ga-ni*]-*ia* Seal of Adad-mudammeq //
 Se[al of Ilu-sagani]ya
 (seal impression)
 3 GŪ.UN AN.NA 3 talents of lead
 ša ^{1a}*a-šur-ŠEŠ-SUM-na* belonging to Aššur-aḫa-iddina
 DUMU ⁴IM-LUGAL-DINGIR.MEŠ-*ni* son of Adad-šar-ilani
i+na UGU ⁴IM-*mu*-SIG₅ (is) owed by Adad-mudammeq
 ù DINGIR-*sa-ga-ni-ia* and Ilu-saganiya,
 DUMU.MEŠ ⁴IM-*mu*-KAR sons of Adad-mušeziḫ,
 DUMU *ra-ši*-DINGIR son of Raši-ilu.
 AN.NA *an-ni-ú* This lead
 šul-*ma-nu* (is) a gift.
a-ba-su-n[u] He will examine their case,
e-mar
 šul-*ma-šu* (and then) receive his gift.
i-laq-qi
 (seals and witnesses)
 (date)

No. 15 (KAJ 54)

The other, retrospective, formulation is used when the case has already been examined.

(seal impression)
 ½ GÍN KŪ.SIG₁₇ *sa-ak-ru* Half a shekel of refined gold
 ša ¹IR-^d*še-ru-a* belonging to Urad-Šerua,
 DUMU *me-lim-saḫ* son of Melimsaḫ,
i+na UGU ^{1d}iš₈-*tár-pí-láḫ* (is) owed by Ištar-piḫ
 DUMU ^{munus}iš₈-*tár-re-mat* son of Ištar-remat
 ša ^{uru}*si-na-nu* of the town of Sinanu.
 KŪ.SIG₁₇ *an-ni-ú* This gold –
 <šul-*ma-nu*> šu-*ut a-ba-su* it is <a gift>.²⁵
am-rat His case has been examined.
i+na UD-*me* On the day
i-ri-šu-šu-ni he requests it
i-dan he shall deliver it,
 ù *tup-pu-šu* and (then) may break his tablet.
i-ḫap-pi
 (witnesses)
 (date)

No. 17 (KAJ 48)

From the eighteen *šulmānu* tablets in this archive a clear pattern emerges. The debtors have undertaken to make a “gift”, which we would perhaps call a bribe, to a member of

²⁵ The scribe has rather embarrassingly omitted the word *šulmānu*, but that it is correctly restored is evident by comparison with the other texts, for example No. 18:8’–14’ KŪ.SIG₁₇ *an-ni-ú šul-ma-nu šu-ut a-ba-su am-rat šul-ma-šu i-da-an* “This gold – it is a gift. His case has been examined. He shall deliver his gift ...”.

the family, in return for having their case examined. The texts do not suggest that the case will necessarily be decided in favour of the debtor, so that on the surface at least the bribe is aimed at securing the creditor's attention rather than influencing the decision. These are not hole-in-the-corner transactions, but a socially accepted convention, because they are regularly witnessed and sealed by the witnesses, so that the documents have the appearance of private legal documents valid in law, rather than transactions internal to the administration. Matthews has noted that in some instances where the case has already been examined there is only a single seal impression, indicating that the witnesses had not sealed, in contrast to the prospective *šulmānu* texts where the witnesses' seal impressions are normally present.²⁶

The substance of the bribes promised is quite varied.²⁷ Aššur-aḥa-iddina is twice promised a female slave, one of them a weaver (Nos. 1–2). He is also promised a cow (No. 4), and 10 rams (No. 8). His son Melisaḥ is once promised 3 ewes, and twice a single cow (Nos. 5–6), while in No. 3 a donkey mare is promised to Melisaḥ's wife. Round amounts of grain are promised to Aššur-aḥa-iddina (5 homers ~ 500 litres, No. 10; 10 homers ~ 1,000 litres, No. 11), and to Melisaḥ (10 homers, No. 12; 20 homers ~ 2,000 litres, No. 13). In text No. 54, which is not itself a *šulmānu* transaction but refers to one, there is mention of as many as 130 homers of grain. Finally metals: 1 talent of lead (*annuku*) is promised to Aššur-aḥa-iddina in No. 14 and to Melisaḥ's wife in No. 16. In No. 15 Aššur-aḥa-iddina is promised 3 talents of lead, while in both No. 17 and No. 18 Urad-Šerua is promised half a shekel of gold. While we do not know the relevant exchange rates to allow us to compare the value of these different bribes, it is clear that they tended to be round sums, no doubt varying with the poverty of the debtor and the nature of the case. For payments in normal commercial contexts Middle Assyrian texts tend to favour metal (copper, lead or silver), and the range of payments in kind (animals, grain) attested here underlines the fact that this is not a purely economic situation, but one with a strong social element, and reminds us of practices at Nuzi which also reflect a more traditional economy less tied to a metal currency (see p. 356).

One striking feature of these transactions is that the debtor is frequently not from Aššur but from somewhere in the countryside. Thus in at least nine cases the debtor, or potential debtor, comes from a place outside Aššur – never a well-known town, so very likely no more than a village. In No. 11 the place is called Šarika, and we know from No. 50:12 that the family archives included legal “clearances” to do with the purchase of land and persons there.²⁸ Moreover, some of the other parties to the transactions have rural responsibilities. In No. 5, if correctly deciphered, we have the bare mention “on account of the chief farmer” (*aššum GAL*

²⁶ However this observation does not hold for two of the Sabi Abyad *šulmānu* texts (on which see, footnote 32).

²⁷ See Postgate 1988a, xv for the full list.

²⁸ No. 54 also involves people from villages, probably in the district of Nineveh where the repayment is to be made, and the other scanty attestations of *šulmānu* contracts serve to reinforce this general picture. These are KAJ 93, which comes from the Ass. 11018 archive of Ubru, a village inspector (cf. Llop-Radaù 2009, No. 160; Pedersén 1985 archive M3), and two texts from Tell al-Rimah (one possibly involving our own Urad-Šerua, Postgate 2002, 303 and 307), and in each case the town or village of the debtor is specified.

ENGAR³.M[EŠ²]), which gives little away. In text No. 54, which does not directly involve a member of the family, two brothers borrow 130 homers of grain, together with fifty sheep, from another chief farmer (GAL *ek-ka-ra-te*), and apparently use the grain immediately as a *šulmānu* bribe “in order to have themselves assigned to Lab’u’s Board” ([*aš*]šum ana lē’i ša ¹lab’i tabākušunu).

While *šulmānu* contracts are clearly private transactions, in the sense that the family member named as the creditor expects to reap the benefit in person (rather than on behalf of the state), there remain two unresolved issues: Were the family members acting in a private capacity or exercising their public office, and was their examination of the cases in a legal or administrative context? Whether the authority they were exercising was by virtue of a judicial office, an administrative appointment or a personal legal relationship to the debtor (as a landlord, for instance), is extremely difficult to determine. Text No. 54, just discussed, seems to belong in the sphere of state administration, and there is nothing in the Ass. 14327 *šulmānu* texts to suggest that our family members were acting formally as judges or that the matters to be resolved were formal legal cases. Moreover, it seems highly unlikely that in Nos. 3 and 16 Melisaḥ’s wife could have been acting in a judicial capacity, even in place of her husband. On the other hand it is worth noting that in KAJ 93, the *šulmānu* text from the Archive of Ubru, the final witness was a judge, and that in TR 2028 from Tell al-Rimah the litigant has successfully been released from custody, which might have a legal dimension.

If they were not acting as judges, what position in the administration, or in society more generally, gave Aššur-aḫa-iddina and his offspring the authority to examine these cases? Taken together, the *šulmānu* transactions convey an abiding relationship between members of the family and their clients over three generations, and the fact that at least half of the clients came from villages means that the family’s sphere of influence extended into the countryside. Unquestionably while governor of Naḥur Melisaḥ would have been in a position to decide disputes within the province on a wide range of matters. However, it is not known if either Aššur-aḫa-iddina or Urad-Šerua were also governors, of Naḥur or any other province, and it is unlikely that all the villages mentioned in our *šulmānu* texts actually fell within the province of Naḥur.²⁹ Moreover, although it would be understandable that in Melisaḥ’s prolonged absence his wife might stand in for him, the obvious reason for his absence would be attendance to his duties in the province, and if involvement in the investigation was associated with his position as governor, one would rather expect it to be conducted there in his presence, and not to be referred to his household back home at Aššur.

Is it possible then that the family members were acting as lower-ranking state officials with responsibilities in the countryside? One countryside official is the chief farmer, or farm manager, (*rab ekkārāte*) who was in charge of a number of farmers on behalf of the state. He was however needed on location, and is more likely to be a local person. He was not high in the hierarchy,³⁰ and his duties were narrowly confined to the agricultural sphere – in No. 54 it is a

²⁹ See later in this chapter on Sinanu and Šarika.

³⁰ See Jakob 2003, 338–41. The texts we have from state archives naturally refer to state employees, and we cannot a priori rule out the possibility that private households retained their own farm managers.

chief farmer who advances the loan which the debtor uses as a *šulmānu* to induce Erib-Aššur to add him to Lab'u's writing-board. Unfortunately we are not given Erib-Aššur's official position, but he could well have been a village inspector (*rab ālāni*). In this archive this official is only encountered in the person of Erib-Sin in Nos. 63–4, but the role of the office is described in Jakob (2003), on the basis of the Billa texts which show that the holder could have responsibilities for labour recruitment,³¹ and it is noteworthy that the archive owner Ubru was – at times at least – a village inspector and kept his documentation on the west side of the city at Aššur. The post would however normally be attached to a provincial administration, and it therefore is affected by the same considerations as the governorship itself. The failure of the texts themselves to describe the nature of the case to be decided makes it difficult to assess whether it was as holders of this office that our family members were in a position to make the decision.³²

Another possibility is that they were acting in a private capacity as a landowner or some other influential member of the local community in question. Their archive does seem to show that they owned land in more than one locality outside Aššur (see the next section). This would give them standing within the town or village, and because they hardly cultivated it in person there will surely have been tenants dependent on them in some way. Similar influence would no doubt also be attached to any real estate they may have held from the state under a prebendary system. Nevertheless, it is implicit in the formulation of these texts that the family member was acting in some sense as an arbitrator, as a third party, and therefore it is unlikely that the family's relationship to the litigant or debtor was simply that of landlord to tenant, under which this elaborate system of legally certified inducements would hardly have been necessary or appropriate. Possibly, though, the family's standing in the community in general put its individual members in a position to act as arbiters in either state or judicial affairs without holding any formal office in the administration or the judiciary.

Other Rural Links

That the family had private interests in rural Assyria is supported by other documents from within and outside the archive. Aššur-aḥa-iddina is the creditor in two grain loans (Nos. 20–1) which include a “harvester clause” requiring the borrower to provide labour at harvest time, and implies that Aššur-aḥa-iddina had fields under cultivation (from which the grain probably derived); in No. 20 the debtor comes from a village called Tugau. From Melisaḥ

³¹ See Jakob 2003, 160–6. No syllabic writing of the title is attested, although it sometimes has the syllabic complement *-ni*. For one village inspector apparently based at Šibaniba see on Bi 48 (p. 276).

³² Of five *šulmānu* documents from Tell Sabi Abyad one names as creditor a king's daughter, two name Aššur-iddin, well known as (Chief) Chancellor, and two rather later documents belong to the steward of the *dunnu* called Tammitte. As at Aššur, the background to each transaction is not usually described, but in two cases the creditor (once Aššur-iddin and once Tammitte) is asked to intervene in what could be purely administrative decisions, but might also have a legal dimension. Other texts from the farmstead also reveal that these high-ranking officials could act in a legal capacity, and in the countryside it is probably unrealistic to expect a rigid demarcation between legal and administrative authority. (Many thanks to Frans Wiggermann for showing me these texts on which he reported at the Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale at Leiden in 2012).

and his son the evidence for the family's rural estates comes in the form of contracts with an agent. Thus in No. 27 a farm manager at ʿTuṭura (otherwise unknown) owed 5 homers of grain, and the document we have states that the original loan tablet has been entrusted to a third party (Iqiš-Adad) who is to have the debt paid to Melisaḥ. No. 28 also requires an agent to have grain of Melisaḥ's paid over, and then deposited into storage, and it starts with a reference to "previous tablets", making it clear that the agent had carried out similar tasks on former occasions. In No. 36 the agent, Marduk-bel-išmanni, has been given four different tablets to realise by Urad-Šerua:

ŠU.NÍGIN 4 <i>tup-pa-tu</i>	Total: 4 tablets
ša ¹ IR- ^d še-ru-a	belonging to Urad-Šerua . . .
a-na ^{1,d} AMAR.UTU-EN-iš-ma-n[i] . . .	are given to Marduk-bel-išmanni . . .
a-na ša-ad-du-ni	to secure payment.
ta-ad-na ú-ša-dan	He shall secure payment,
i-dan ú <i>tup-pu-[šu]</i>	shall make payment (himself) and
i-ḥap-pi	(then) may break his tablet.

No. 36 (KAJ 110): 13–21

One of these tablets was a loan of lead (*annuku*). Two were for cereal products from named individuals. The fourth was for 5 homers of grain owed by Ašaredu "which he had taken in a farmstead in the administrative area of Ta'idu" (No. 36:9–12).³³

Ta'idu is on the upper Ḥabur, in the same region as Naḥur, where Melisaḥ was once governor, and a long way from Aššur.³⁴ There is some evidence to suggest that the family also had interests in the region of Karana, at or near Tell al-Rimah, some 60 kilometres west of Nineveh in the jezirah. The family's back files included a chest of tablets relating to Karana (No. 50:16),³⁵ and in No. 17 the promise of half a shekel of gold to Urad-Šerua comes from a resident of Sinanu, a place which is otherwise only known from a text from Tell al-Rimah.³⁶ Furthermore, the names Melisaḥ and Urad-Šerua turn up on tablets from a small archive found at the site of Tell al-Rimah itself, one of them a *šulmānu* text involving Urad-Šerua (see p. 266).³⁷ The debtor in a *šulmānu* text of Aššur-aḥa-iddina (No. 11) comes from a village called Šarika (whose location is unknown), and a man making bricks for Urad-Šerua's wife also came from this village (No. 48), suggesting that the family retained long-standing interests there. This seems to be confirmed by the entry in No. 50:11–12 listing "Clearance(s) of people and fields of the town of Šarika". The term clearance (*tazkītu*) probably relates to the

³³ In Postgate 1988a, xvii, it was suggested that the "debt collection" texts of Melisaḥ and Urad-Šerua (Nos. 27, 28 and 36) showed "the family engaged in rural administration", meaning public administration on behalf of the state. In fact it now seems to be at least as likely if not more so that these were part of their private enterprise.

³⁴ Assyriological opinion is in some disarray over the location of Ta'idu, but the evidence (not least the itinerary published in Röhlig 1983) still appears to me to favour a location on the upper Ḥabur, whether or not there is a second town with an identical or similar name in the Diyarbakir region.

³⁵ If Tell al-Rimah was not itself Karana (and there is some reason to think it may rather have been Qatara, cf. Nashef 1988, and Postgate 2002, 305–6 footnote 5), it was certainly a neighbour of, and probably within the province of, Karana.

³⁶ TR 2069A, collated by Douglas Kennedy, see Nashef 1985, 231; Postgate 1988a, 33.

³⁷ Postgate 2002, 307 footnote 26.

exclusion of competing ownership claims, indicating that the family's status in at least some of these rural contexts was associated with private property in both real estate and "human resources" (ÉRIN.MEŠ = *šābu*).

We would expect urban landlords with rural property also to own animals. In its ancillary storeroom, the family kept a chest of tablets recording oxen and donkeys owed by "Assyrians" (No. 50:17–18), a chest of "sheep owed by Assyrians" (l. 21) and a chest of "[sheep]" (or "[oxen]") "owed by the shepherds" (l. 24). Among the Ass. 14327 tablets there is one tablet regulating Melisaḥ's relations with a shepherd (No. 30): it shows that he had a close, long-standing relationship with the shepherd, Adad-ereš, their mutual accounts being elaborate enough to be recorded on a writing-board (l. 8), and sheep sometimes being handed over to him "to be held in readiness" (ll. 2–4). The tablet states that the animals still owed were "belonging to (*ša*) Melisaḥ" (l. 21), and although they include "one goat of the palace, for the rations of the king's troops, which was given to Ber-mušabši", in general the document indicates that we are looking at Melisaḥ's personal flocks, probably kept near Aššur for at least some of the year. By contrast in No. 38 Urad-Šerua charges a flock-master (*nāqīdu*) called Šilliya with collecting the debts recorded on three separate tablets, two of them for a single cow, and one for 27 sheep. The text is formulated very like the debt collector texts for grain mentioned earlier (Nos. 27, 28 and 36); unfortunately no place name is mentioned, but here too there is nothing to indicate that this is anything other than a purely private affair.

Rural Links in Non-Family Texts

Among the texts which do not visibly derive from the core members of the family, there are two small groups in particular which deserve a mention here for the light they may shed on the urban:rural symbiosis. Nos. 54–6 differ considerably from each other in detail, but they share a common underlying transaction, which is the loan of grain to villagers, backed up by an additional obligation to provide both harvesters and, unusually, also animals.³⁸ The simplest to describe is No. 55: here the debtor, Aššur-apla-iddina, "of the farmstead (*dunnu*) of Ninuayu the Burudaeen", borrows 150 homers (~15,000 litres) of grain from Adad-ušammeh, who is "the steward of the farmstead of ...", and we are told that "This corn will keep his household alive in the absence of any of his own".³⁹ This is therefore a loan taken out in a time of famine, but the terms are not unduly generous: in five months time he will have to repay 200 per cent of the grain borrowed, and the grain debt has attached to it an obligation to provide 70 harvesters and (perhaps) 70 ewes.⁴⁰ In light of this text we can understand the series of eight separate loan contracts which were gathered onto a single tablet (No. 56). In l. 22–4

³⁸ The texts, especially No 56 (MARV 1.47), have been discussed several times, including Aynard & Durand 1980, 41–3, Harrak 1989, Farber 1990 and Pedersén 1991a.

³⁹ ŠE-um.MEŠ *an-ni-ú i-na la-a šu-a-te É-su ú-ba-li-tí* (ll. 11–13).

⁴⁰ For the suggestion that these sheep may in fact already be the property of the creditor and the text is regulating an existing contractual herding relationship see Postgate 1988a, 144; but this may place too much faith in the generosity of the creditors.

(correctly: 45–7⁴¹), the total amount is given as 888 homers of grain, belonging to Kaššu, son of Šamaš-din-deni, of the city of Kurda, a provincial capital west of Nineveh in the jezirah, and from l. 32 (i.e. l. 4) we learn that he is a scribe and a representative (LÚ.A.BA *qe-pi*). Three of his debtors come from a village called Ilimenanaša, one is a “palace farmer of Kurda”, for the others their village is not mentioned. These are “hardship loans”: in §2 we are told: “He took this grain as a loan (*a-na pu-ḫi*) in the absence of any of his own (*i-na la šu-a-te*), (and) gave it to his brothers”, and §1, §3 and §5 have an almost identical clause. In §6 and §7 the “brothers” are replaced by the “sons of his village” (DUMU(.MEŠ) URU-*šu*).⁴² Despite my own comment that these texts reflect “a practice of making loans from government stocks to the rural population in their time of need” (1988a, xvii), we know from the Babu-aḫa-iddina Archive that private households might use a “representative” (*qēpu*), and it cannot be considered certain that Kaššu was acting for the state instead of as a private urban entrepreneur. Their presence in the house may be connected either to the family’s own rural interests in the north or with its state office.

The other small group of texts is Nos. 71–4. Texts 71 and 73 seem to record allocations of agricultural plots of land to Assyrian citizens, some of them recurring in both texts. In No. 71 the land is in the territory of a town possibly called Reš-naribi, and possibly in the province (*ḫa[l-z]u*) of Nineveh, and the allocation appears to have been made by a “mayor” (*ḫāziānu*), perhaps from a “writing-[board of] Mudammeq-Marduk”, known to be the Governor of the Land (that is Aššur province).⁴³ In No. 72 some of the same recipients reappear, and the same two officials are involved, but here they are distributing houses in a different town. Despite all the uncertainties, Nos. 71–3 therefore seem to derive from the state administration of land, perhaps in the north of the country. No. 74 is not related to them, but it belongs in the public sphere: it is badly broken, but on the obverse there are sections listing areas of land, volumes of seed corn and over 490 homers of grain “of the palace”. The reverse names nine or more persons, who include Libur-zanin-Aššur, the well-known royal eunuch; Urad-Šerua, son of Melisaḫ; and Aššur-bel-ilani, son of Ittabši-den-Aššur, royal representative and Urad-Šerua’s brother-in-law. Rev. 13 may say “ar]my, ration for 2 months” (*ḫu-r]a-di ŠE ŠUKU ša 2 ITI UD.MEŠ*). Unfortunately this is all too damaged to give a clear result, but what does seem certain is that the text belongs in the context of state administration and involved a number of officials highly placed in the Aššur hierarchy in the late 13th century, including our own

⁴¹ The correct arrangement of the text on this tablet was pointed out in Pedersén 1991b: in consequence, lines 29–51 of my edition of No. 56 should be lines 1–23, followed by lines 1–28, which become lines 24–51, with lines 52–6 on the left edge remaining unchanged. For convenience in the text I have numbered each section in the correct order, corresponding to the old line numbering of my edition as follows: §1 – 29–36; §2 – 37–41; §3 – 42–7; §4 – 48–51; §5 – 1–5; §6 – 6–11; §7 – 12–17; §8 – 18–21; §9 – 22–28; §10 – 52–56.

⁴² As Farber points out, the debtors in §4 and §8 are not villagers but state employees (a “palace farmer” and a “royal eunuch”), and their debts are not loans, because the phrase *ana pūḫi ilqe* is not used (1990). This might incline us to see the loans as state business. The total amount of grain to be repaid is given in l. 27 (at the end of §9) as 1,664 homers, which is less than twice the total owed (888 homers). Farber’s calculations provide an explanation for this: the villagers were to repay the grain at 200 per cent (as in No. 54), but the two state dependants paid no, or less, interest.

⁴³ I am inclined to favour Freydank’s proposal to restore *ša le-[’i] ’mu-SIG₅-d*AMAR.UTU, instead of *ša li-[me]* as given in the transliteration of No. 71:28, but this is not certain.

Urad-Šerua. Although not provable, it seems probable that the state officials listed here were recipients of prebendary land allocations, and taken together with Nos. 71–3, it demonstrates at least that some of the documents kept in the house derived directly from the state administration of land, incidentally confirming the high status of our family.

The Family and the House(hold)

Our texts do not seem to refer to the “House of Urad-Šerua” or of his father or grandfather, though there can scarcely be any doubt that this would have been current usage. Mention of their “House” would not be expected within the family’s own archives, of course, and references to their establishment in other texts would depend on their role within the government structure of the day. The obvious, though unprovable, assumption is that their “House” was the building excavated in dA8I where the Ass. 14327 tablets were found, and that this was a family house occupied by Urad-Šerua and his son, having previously been home to Melisaḥ and his father, Aššur-aḥa-iddina, perhaps in its earlier occupation stratum. It is impossible to know if the family were long-standing Aššur residents, although the two earlier generations had impeccable Assyrian names – it might seem obvious that they were from Aššur, but we should at least consider the possibility that they were a powerful local family who at some stage had moved into the city from somewhere in the provinces. Melisaḥ’s name is Kassite.⁴⁴ His mother’s name is not known to us, but if she were of Kassite stock this might explain it. We have no evidence for more than the one son in each generation: either the principals had no brothers, or if they did, the brothers took no part in the family activities reflected in the archive. Nevertheless, we can see that the family operated as a unity across the generations. This is not only because the Ass. 14327 group of tablets includes texts in which four successive generations are involved, but because, as already noted, Melisaḥ and Aššur-aḥa-iddina are active in the same year, and Melisaḥ and his son are both mentioned as principals in a single transaction (No. 34). In No. 42 we find Urad-Šerua accepting renewed liability for a loan of grain and straw owed by his grandfather, in accordance with a formally executed tablet (*ša pi-i tup-pi ša-bi-te*). Noteworthy too is the involvement in transactions of the wives of Melisaḥ and Urad-Šerua (Nos. 3, 16 and 48). Why they feature in these texts is not told to us: it may be that they were acting as head of the family while their husbands were away from the city – and as a provincial governor Melisaḥ at least may well have been absent for months at a time – but it is not impossible that they were pursuing their own business interests (see p. 240).

Sales of persons are well attested in Middle Assyrian times, and we would expect an elite household to include slaves. From (admittedly unfulfilled) *šulmānu* contracts we learn that Aššur-aḥa-iddina expected to be given a slave woman (No. 1) and a female weaver (No. 2), and in No. 32 Melisaḥ is given a male called Ber-šuma-iddina; this text is slightly curious, but he may be described as a chief doorkeeper (GAL *e-te*; so Jakob 2003, 224). In one of the latest

⁴⁴ It is occasionally written ¹*me-lim-saḥ*, for the nasal component of which cf. Sassmannshausen 2001, 217 No. 13:17: ¹*mi-le-en-za-aḥ*.

texts, Urad-Šerua's son Išme-Ninurta accepts a slave of Lullayu as security for the price of a horse. In No. 50 one chest contained "Clearance(s) of people and fields of the town of Šarika", which seems to imply that the family did legally purchase slaves, but it seems likely that for the most part they would have remained in the countryside rather than becoming part of the city establishment. All this is anecdotal, but does at least agree with an expectation that the household owned some labour resources both in the city and on its countryside estates.

To judge from Babu-aḥa-iddina's correspondence, there may well have been associates of the household who, while not being slaves, participated in their affairs. We have no mention of representatives (*qēpūtu*) as in the Babu-aḥa-iddina texts, nor of a steward (AGRIG), and it is likely enough that their affairs did not require such specialised administrators. We may though take a hint from No. 50, where the family's back files include documents belonging to Riš-Adad and also debt-notes from him, and from a number of other persons, several of whom probably resurface as witnesses and scribes in the Ass. 14327 archive. This suggests that they belonged among the associates of the household, and may have been available to act as scribes. There is no sign that they were relatives. Other persons associated with the family may well have operated outside the city, such as the agents Iqiš-Adad in No. 27, Mannu-gir-Aššur in No. 28 and Marduk-bel-išmanni in No 36, who were entrusted with calling in the family's debts from different debtors. The shepherd in No. 30 and the flock-master in No. 38 could of course serve several masters, even if they had a long-term relationship with the family, like any craftsmen who undertook work for them.

State or Private Business?

From p. 245 it is certain that both Melisaḥ and Urad-Šerua were engaged in official state duties in the Ḥabur region, and that probably later on Urad-Šerua had public responsibilities for state manpower. On one occasion Melisaḥ is called the governor (*bēl pāḥiti*) of Naḥur (No. 34), but frustratingly this is the only formal title given to any of the family in the archive, although it is clear that at the same time Urad-Šerua was also carrying out state business in relation to his father's office. It would not be unheard of for a son to succeed his father as the governor of a province, but we have no evidence that this happened here, and Naḥur is not the only provincial centre mentioned in the texts. Although in No. 74 Urad-Šerua is mentioned in the same breath as well-known high-ranking officers, such as Libur-zanin-Aššur, neither he nor his father seems to have acted as an eponym, which might suggest that the family was not in the very highest echelons of the social or administrative hierarchy. Note, though, that Urad-Šerua's wife was the sister of Aššur-bel-ilani, who was an eponym and governor of the City of Aššur, so they moved in moderately high circles.

It is sometimes difficult to decide whether a given transaction should be seen as a public or private activity. Indeed, there is a body of opinion which considers that we should not try to make such a distinction, and that there was no clear demarcation between the public and private activities of a household (see Chapter 6). I believe that this is fundamentally erroneous: that Middle Assyrian households, if not others, knew very well what was their property and what was merely entrusted to their charge, and that generally, although admittedly not

always, it is possible to determine whether a transaction was private or in the service of the state. With their commercial traditions the Assyrians themselves were fully conscious of the distinction, and they did not need to make a song and dance about it – they simply adapted their lifestyle and social associations to suit the requirements of the situation. Just as an individual, once appointed to a state office, had a public and a private role to fill, so did his establishment. If the family employed a scribe for its private affairs, there is no reason why the same scribe should not write any documents required on state business. If it used a good carpenter for its furniture, why not use the same man when it came to state business? If in the countryside family members managed their own estates through agents, why not use the same agents for state lands? And so on. It should therefore be no surprise to find the household as a whole and individual members of the household active in both private and state affairs.

Summary

How then can we distinguish the private from the public transactions? As far as the wording is concerned, there seem to be two simple and explicit formulations relating to the “ownership statement” in contracts, as already observed in the Stewards’ Archive. In the normal Middle Assyrian debt-note the item concerned is defined first (e.g. “10 homers of grain”), followed by the identity of the owner (e.g. *ša* PN “belonging to PN”). In some texts at this stage the text has “belonging to the palace” (*ša É.GAL-lim*). This is as clear a statement as one could wish that the item is state property. It will then be followed by information about the person responsible for this state property, and as in text No. 26 quoted here, this is expressed with the phrase *ša qāt* PN, literally “of the hand of PN”, which I usually render “in the charge of PN”.⁴⁵

40 *a-za-i-lu ša* IN.NU

[š]*a É.GAL-lim*

[š]*a ŠU* ¹*mi-li-saḥ*

[DUM]U ¹*d**a-šur-ŠEŠ-SUM-na*

a-na ši-pi-ir-te

[š]*a* ¹*DÜG.GA-šil-lí-gu-la*

LÚ.AGRIG *ša É* ¹*si-ki*

¹*d**a-šur-MU-SUM-na* DUMU ^d*a-šur-ti-šam<-me>*

¹10–*MU-SUM-na* ^ù ^d*a-šur-MU-PAB*

^{hú}*a-lik ur-ki*

ša É ¹[*s*]*i-ki*

^ù ⁽¹⁾TAR-[*x x (x)*] *a*?

^{hú}*ek-ka-ri*

ma-aḥ-ru

40 bales of straw

belonging to the palace,

in the charge of Milisaḥ,

son of Aššur-aḥa-iddina,

on the instructions

of Ṭab-šilli-Gula,

steward of the House of Sikku,

Aššur-šuma-iddina, son of Aššur-tišamme,

Adad-šuma-iddina, and Aššur-šuma-ušur,

retainer(s)

of the House of Sikku

and PN,

the farmer,

have received.

No. 26 (KAJ 118)

⁴⁵ These two criteria for identifying state property were mentioned in Postgate 1988a, xxiv, and I believe they are generally uncontroversial (cf. Machinist 1992, 156), although the phrase *ša ekalli* has sometimes mistakenly been thought to refer to the *sūtu* measure in use (e.g. Saporetti 1970c; Powell 1989–90, 501). The issue was also addressed in Postgate 1986b, 26–7; cf. Jakob 2009, 16.

Compare No. 29, where grain “of the palace” is “in the charge of” the governor of Ta’idu, and Nos. 58–9 in which the governor of Aššur province has charge of state grain, all administrative documents characteristically without witnesses. In other cases, no outright owner is mentioned, and we have just the phrase *ša qāt* PN, but even this clearly signals that the item or person is entrusted by the state to the “charge” of PN. Thus the four assorted soldiers in No. 44 are “in the charge of Urad-Šerua” (*ša ŠU*). It is true that *ša qāt* could also be used where the person is acting on behalf of another individual, as in Nos. 63–4 where the flour worker Adad-bel-nemeqi is acting on behalf of Erib-Sin the village inspector, but where no individual owner is specified the default assumption would be that it is the state.

The Babu-aḥa-iddina Archive shows that we cannot automatically use documentary format to distinguish private from public transactions. Within the confines of an administrative organisation, as illustrated by the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive, where the sanction is not that of the law but of the government hierarchy, liabilities would regularly be recorded without the formalities normal in public documents, but while most unsealed and unwitnessed texts belong in the public sector, we cannot entirely rule out the existence of similar texts within the private sector. From the public sector Nos. 44 and 45 serve as evidence of the delivery of troops which had been “in the charge of” Urad-Šerua. Neither is sealed or witnessed (nor was No. 46 which was doubtless similar although it lacks a statement of delivery), no doubt because the transaction was internal to the state organisation. However, No. 37, in which Urad-Šerua is stock taking donkeys and auditing Siqiya’s accounts is also unsealed: the mention of six case-tablets (*kišrāte*) of Siqiya’s shows that he had an ongoing relationship with the household, and this may have allowed them to dispense with the normal legal formalities. The presence in a single deposit of tablets of documents relating both to the family’s private business and to its official responsibilities is not unique: as observed already by Machinist;⁴⁶ the same applies to both the Tell Billa and the Tell al-Rimah tablets. It merely reinforces the presumption that the family would have used the same skills and resources to carry out both sets of activities, and it does not of course imply that they could not tell the difference.

⁴⁶ 1982, 28–9.

5.1. Tell al-Rimah, Ancient Karana or Qatara

In the course of David Oates's excavations of 1964 and 1965 at Tell al-Rimah, in poorly preserved Middle Assyrian levels high on the central mound and overlying the massive remains of an early second-millennium temple, one small and one much larger assemblage of tablets were recovered. This site was one of a chain of towns running west-east south of the Jebel Sinjar, along the boundary between settled agricultural lands and the untilled jezirah, which certainly included two Middle Assyrian provincial capitals, Addariq and Karana. Tell al-Rimah is marked on the map (Figure 2.1, p. 31) under the name of Karana; in fact the evidence of the texts may slightly favour identifying it with Qatara, but in either case it will have fallen within the province of Karana. The tablets attest the presence of an active Assyrian agricultural and commercial community here, with ties to the centre – we know from Urad-Šerua's Archive that his family held property in the district.

Both the smaller group, consisting of about 20 tablets stored in a jar, and a good proportion of the more dispersed larger assemblage are concerned with the private affairs of a number of local families, and consist mainly of bilateral sealed and witnessed legal documents. In both groups there are tablets formulated as receipts, recording the repayment of commercial debts. Normally when a debt was repaid in full the practice was simply to destroy the pertinent debt-note, and no further documentation would then be required. However, if, as sometimes happened, the original debt-note was not at hand, or the amount repaid was not the full sum, destroying the original document was not an option and a fresh tablet recording the repayment was needed. It is a sign of the lively commercial life at Rimah that there is a relatively large number of such documents, some at least being case-tablets, a documentary format which in Middle Assyrian practice is used for receipts. Almost all of the receipt texts are sealed, but only some of them witnessed, and it cannot be coincidental that in the majority of the unwitnessed texts the goods are not said to be “belonging to” (ša) the creditor, but only “in” his “charge” (ša qāt). The simplest explanation of this, by comparison with texts from other sites, would be that in these cases the creditor was acting on behalf of a state organisation.

Mostly the presence of the state in the town is betrayed by a variety of transactions in which the local citizens are interacting with government: either paying customs dues on imported animals or making a range of payments in kind destined for men or animals engaged in military service for the state (ilku). However, confirmation that some of the citizens represented in the larger assemblage may have had governmental responsibilities follows from three of the texts, where the creditor is named as the palace, and in two cases where a šulmānu gift is recorded we are reminded of the Urad-Šerua Archive and

the uncertainties surrounding the capacity in which the creditor in those transactions was expected to act as an arbiter.

The City

Northern Mesopotamia in the early second millennium BC was occupied by a mosaic of small polities centred on cities whose independence from or allegiance to more powerful rulers varied with bewildering frequency. Some of these cities were in the plains stretching west from the Tigris between Aššur in the south and Nineveh to the north, as far as the Ḫabur. In this region were the cities of Andariq, Kurda and Karana with their petty rulers, who often feature in the Mari letters. All three of these cities must have survived into the later second millennium, as they are included in the 12th-century lists of provinces supplied by the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive (see p. 94). Andariq and Karana lay south of the Jebel Sinjar and Jebel Ibrahim, the range of low hills stretching eastward from it towards Aššur, and Kurda was perhaps further north, but their precise locations remain uncertain. The excavations at Tell al-Rimah in the 1960s and 1970s, directed by David Oates, revealed a palace and an archive, which belonged to the rulers of Karana at the time of Zimri-Lim of Mari (18th century BC), but some uncertainty persists as to whether the site is Karana itself or the sister city of Qatara which belonged in the same small kingdom.¹ Whichever it is, the excavations showed that the city was still occupied during the time of Mittanian domination of northern Mesopotamia, and also under the Middle Assyrian kingdom. This is clearest from the cuneiform archives recovered from the poorly preserved remnants of the late second-millennium building overlying the Old Babylonian temple (Level Ib; see Figure 5.1).²

One group of about 30 tablets found in 1964 mostly came from a single jar, but a larger group, in the region of 140 tablets excavated in 1965 and 1966, although also associated with the remains of at least two jars, was more widely scattered. Despite their provenance from what was probably still a public part of the town, these texts are predominantly concerned with the commercial affairs of individuals. The majority of the documents concern loans of lead or grain, with provisions for their repayment, and convey a picture of a long-established community of businessmen with active interests in the local rural community as well as links to the outside world.³

¹ For doubts on this score see Postgate, Oates & Oates 1997, 18–20, with additional comment on the Middle Assyrian period in Postgate 2002, 305–6; Nashef 1988 with earlier literature. There is no evidence that the dental in Qatara was emphatic in Middle Assyrian.

² See Postgate, Oates & Oates 1997, 26. According to Saggs 1968, 154 the tablets recovered in 1965 mostly came from the courtyard on the south side of the temple, and were “associated with the fragments of a jar in which they were probably stored” (see Oates 1966, 130); two (TR 2903 and 2913) came from within the Shrine, Phase I (Oates 1966, 125), and nine more from Trench Ab, in the Courtyard, Phase I (TR 2904–2912). In 1966 approximately 40 further tablets and fragments were found in the Trench Ab, “stored in two or more jars” and “very close to the spot where an even larger collection was found in 1965” (Oates 1967, 90). The 1964 group mostly came from within a jar in a room “overlying the Phase II vault at the north end of the ante-chamber” (Oates 1965, 75). See Wiseman 1968, 196–205 Appendix D for the precise provenance of each tablet.

³ For the general nature of the two archives see Postgate 2002, on which much of this section is based.



Figure 5.1. Tell al-Rimah: the temple mound in 1971 (Photo J. N. Postgate).

The Families' Affairs

Although they were evidently stored separately, the tablets from the jar excavated in 1964 belong in the same time frame as the larger group recovered in 1965 and 1966,⁴ since Ilu-našir, one of the principals in the smaller archive, took out a loan from Kidin-ilani and his brothers, who are members of the best-attested family in the larger group.⁵ The families had been there for some time: six generations are attested in the family of Aṭḥi-nada and it is probable that Assyrians were resident in the town from early in the 13th century (under Adad-nirari I), if not already in the 14th century.⁶

The tablets from the 1964 jar (100–119) derive exclusively from the private affairs of Ilu-našir and his family. Two of them (105 and 117) concern the division of the family estate, while the remainder are formally sealed and witnessed legal documents recording loans or other transactions made by the family in lead (*annuku*), grain or, in one instance, onions. Similarly, in the larger archive, while there are also texts relating to the division of paternal

⁴ The 1965 tablets were published in Saggs 1968 and those from 1966 in Wiseman 1968, together with the smaller group found in a jar in Room 2 in 1964 (TR 100ff.). Following these editions they are referred to in this chapter by their excavation number (omitting the TR for convenience). Some collations carried out by the writer are mentioned in the survey of the Rimah documents published as Postgate 2002. Although found scattered, the main body of tablets from 1965 and 1966 may originally have been a single archive; Saggs comments that “the legible documents amongst TR. 2903 to TR. 2913 appear to have belonged to the same group of families as the tablets of the main archive” (1968, 154).

⁵ Mentioned in text 115 (see Postgate 2002, 298).

⁶ On the six generations of the main family, descendants of Aṭḥi-nada, see Wilcke 1976, 229–33. For one tablet, TR 3037, dating to Aššur-uballiṭ see recently Llop 2012, 90–1.

estates (2016, 2037 and 2099), the majority of the documents illustrate the commercial activities of the families involved. At least 11 different creditors feature in these texts, but the best represented is Mušezib-Adad, of the fifth generation of Athi-nada's family, who lends grain, often with the provision of harvesters built into the loan; some of the debtors were no doubt local residents, but others came from villages or even from the city of Arbail.⁷ Other loans of lead, or a commodity called *šarbu*, probably also a metal, were advanced to debtors from other places. While some of these (e.g. 2913) are straightforward loans with the tablet sealed by the borrower and by witnesses, two different types of document which may be termed “debt repayment receipts” or “debt reduction receipts” are frequent. The formulation can vary, but the common feature of these texts is that a payment is being made and recorded as part of an established relationship between two parties. In the cases where a debt is being repaid in full, the receipt is needed because the creditor cannot produce the original debt-note to be destroyed, and the scribe will include a clause such as “That tablet, wherever it turns up, is invalid, is proper to be broken” (*tuppu šit ašar tēlianni naḥ(a)rat ana ḥīpi naṭat*).⁸ More often the original debt-note may be present but cannot yet be destroyed because the amount of the initial debt was greater than the repayment made at the time, so that an instruction to deduct the amount from the sum named in the original debt-note is included, as for example in TR 2057:

TR 2057 (composite text from tablet + envelope)

12 MA.NA AN.NA	12 minas of lead,
ša ŠU ¹ <i>a-bu</i> -DÜG.GA	in the charge of Abu-ṭab,
DUMU ⁴ KUR.NA-EN- <i>ni-še-šu</i>	son of Šadanu-bel-nišešu,
¹ <i>na-bu-du</i>	Nabudu,
DUMU DINGIR- <i>a-bi</i>	son of Ilu-abi,
ša ^{uru} <i>ú-ni-na</i>	of the town Unina
<i>ma-ḥi-ir</i>	has received.
<i>i-na tup-p[i]</i>	From the formally executed
<i>ša-bi-it-te</i>	tablet
ša 30 MA.NA AN.NA	for 30 minas of lead
[line(s) damaged]	[owed by him] ⁹
<i>ú-kar₅-ru-ú</i>	they shall deduct it.

Two similar receipts were included in the smaller archive, one prescribing that the amount received is to be deducted from “a(ny) tablet which turns up” (102), the other, following K. Deller, from “the formally-executed tablets incumbent on his father” (100).¹⁰

As it happens, the number of receipts from Tell al-Rimah exceeds that from any other archive, and these are summarised in Table 5.1, showing their range of documentary format.

⁷ Texts 2903, 3015, 3022, 3014 (Postgate 2002, 298).

⁸ Texts 115, 2061; cf. also Billa 18–19.

⁹ Some phrase such as *ša muḥḥišu* “which is incumbent on him” is expected here.

¹⁰ Reading in ll.8–11 [*i+n*] *a tup-pa-te-š[u šab]-bu-ta-[te]* *ša UGU a-bi^l-šu ú-kar-ru-ú*, the emendation to *a-bi-šu* following a suggestion of K. Deller.

Table 5.1. *Attributes of receipts from Tell al-Rimah*

TR No.	Type	<i>ša (qāt)</i>	Provider	Commodity	Env.	Seal(s)	Witnesses
100	debt reduction	<i>ša</i>	Ḫubarzi	grain			yes
101	debt reduction [?]	<i>ša</i>	Ḫubarzi	lead	yes	yes [?]	yes
102	debt repayment	<i>ša</i>	Baḫu'u	lead	yes	yes	yes
2069A + 2908	debt reduction	<i>ša</i>	Adad-bel-kenate	lead		yes=2048	yes
3016	debt reduction	<i>ša</i>	Šadanu-ašared	lead		yes	no
2018	debt reduction [?]	<i>ša</i>	Kidin-ilani	grain		yes	no
2061	debt repayment	<i>ša</i>	Bel-leṭir	grain			yes
2910	receipt	<i>ša</i>	Abu-ṭab (B)	grain			yes
2030	receipt	<i>ša</i>	sons of Abu-ṭab (B)	lead		yes	yes
2036+2040	receipt	[...]	[...]	[...]		yes	yes
2014	receipt	<i>ša</i>	Abu-ṭab (A/B)	straw		yes=3018	no
3018	receipt	<i>ša</i>	Abu-ṭab (A/B)	straw		yes=2014	no
2062A+B+2905	debt reduction	<i>ša pī tuppī</i>	Šamaš-multepiš [?]	<i>šarbu</i>	yes	yes	no
2084+2904	receipt	<i>ina qāt</i>	Abu-ṭab (A)	lead + grain	yes	yes	yes
2039	receipt	<i>ša qāt</i>	Abu-ṭab	lead	yes	yes	no
2015	debt reduction	<i>ša qāt</i>	Abu-ṭab (A)	lead		yes=3011	no
2057A+B	debt reduction	<i>ša qāt</i>	Abu-ṭab (A)	lead	yes	yes	no
2058	debt reduction	<i>ša qāt</i>	[...]	lead		yes	no
2065	debt reduction	<i>ša qāt</i>	Šamaš-kit[ta-e-tamši]	[...]			[...]
2095A+B	debt reduction [?]	<i>ša qāt</i>	Šamaš-[	lead	yes	yes	[...]
2906	debt reduction	<i>ša qāt</i>	Šamaš-kitta-e-tamši	lead		yes	no
3011+3040	debt reduction	<i>ša qāt</i>	Adad- šumu-lešir	lead	yes	yes=2015	no
3008	receipt	<i>ša qāt</i>	Adad-šumu-[lešir]	<i>šarbu</i>			no
2060	receipt	<i>ša qāt</i>	Šamaš-kitta-e-[tamši]	onions (<i>šumku</i>)		yes	yes [?]
2025	receipt	<i>ša qāt</i>	Ḫaburraru	grain		yes	yes
2053	receipt			<i>šarbu</i>		yes	no
2086	receipt		Aššur-nadin-šumi	<i>bēt nazīqi</i>		yes=3009	no
3009	receipt		Aššur-nadin-šumi	<i>bēt nazīqi</i>		yes=2086	no

Notes to Table

- The texts were published by Saggs, Wiseman and others in *Iraq* 30, with details of the seal impressions in Parker 1977; this table incorporates some results of collations undertaken by me in the Iraq Museum in the 1970s, but the entire assemblage needs to be completely recollated and re-edited.
- While the debt repayment and debt reduction receipts follow moderately consistent formulae, the other receipts are a very mixed group sharing little more than their nature as receipts.
- Abu-ṭab, son of Šadanu-bel-nišešu, is designated Abu-ṭab (A) in the table, and was probably father of Šamaš-kitta-e-tamši; Abu-ṭab (B) is the son of Šadanu-ašared.
- Where no envelope is mentioned, it is impossible to know if the tablet was previously encased.
- Where no seal impression is mentioned, it is impossible to be certain without collation whether the tablet was sealed or not. The notation “yes=3009” means that the same seal was rolled on TR 3009.

Of the 28 documents listed here the great majority were sealed, and 8 were certainly case-tablets, with inner tablet and envelope (and even if no envelope is reported, this need not mean that the tablet was not originally encased). As already noted, in Chapter 3, the use of case-tablets for receipts is a Middle Assyrian idiosyncrasy, best exemplified by this assemblage. We would normally expect the party sealing to be the person acknowledging receipt of the commodity, and although in some administrative contexts it was in fact a third party who sealed (see pp. 70–3), here at Rimah it is certain in at least two cases that the seal is that of the recipient: in 2015 (because the seal was also impressed on 3011 where Adad-šarru-ušur was likewise the recipient), and in 2084+2904 (which has a caption identifying the seal owner on both inner tablet and envelope). For our general assessment of these documents the most significant issue is the contrast between texts where the commodity received belonged to the provider in person (as indicated by the use of *ša*) and those where it was merely in his charge (*ša qāt*). The tabulation of the texts helps to show that this distinction is meaningful, because it correlates broadly with the presence or absence of witnesses. To be precise, of the 11 (or 12) documents where the provider is the actual owner, 8 are witnessed, whereas of the 11 where the commodity is “in the charge of” the provider, only 2 are certainly witnessed. The same contrast between private legal transactions which normally require witnesses and those which belong in a government administrative context and have no witnesses is already familiar from the debt-notes in the Offerings and Stewards’ Archives among others.¹¹ It seems possible that some of the witnessed *ša qāt* instances are in fact private legal documents where the provider is acting not for the state, but on behalf of another private individual. The material is not sufficiently robust to allow us to resolve this, but it does seem likely at least that the unwitnessed *ša qāt* documents belong in the state sector, and that in such cases the provider was acting officially as an agent of the state.

Administrative Officials

This is all the more plausible because the presence of the government is signalled by a few disparate texts dealing with commodities or property “belonging to the palace”.¹² As usual, the persons involved in such transactions are not given professional designations: if they held a formal state office, it does not show in the texts.¹³ We do not have any other mention of local officials, either. 2014 and 3018 refer to a “royal representative” (*qēpu ša šarri*) who seals two receipts for a large quantity of straw needed for the production of baked bricks for a temple, but he had probably been despatched from Aššur.¹⁴ On balance, though, it is likely that Abutaḫ, son of Šadanu-bel-nišešu, and his son Šamaš-kitti-e-tamši were acting on behalf of the

¹¹ It would take too long to discuss the apparent exceptions to the broad rule, and the niceties of whether *ina qāt* in TR 2084+2904 is significantly different from *ša qāt* – (note the two phrases in different contexts in a single document, at Tell Billa, p. 275 Bi 21).

¹² 2031, a letter about a palace farmer; 2045 grain of the palace in the charge of Puḫunu; 2048, miscellaneous items property of the palace; 3031 tablet for a talent of lead of the palace.

¹³ Note though that the palace grain in 2045 is “[in the] charge of Puḫunu, the eunuch of the king” ([LÚ.SAG LUGAL]).

¹⁴ These texts date to year 25 (in Röllig’s list), the year after Tukulti-Ninurta’s own eponymate (Postgate 2002, 307²⁶).

state in the *ša qāt* receipts listed in Table 5.1. If this is so, it shows that the state was in the habit of issuing capital in the form of lead to citizens with whom it had an ongoing relationship, but it does not shed any light on their formal status within the state structure.

In this context, we should mention a couple of texts which indicate that the archive holders were in a position to receive inducements to speed up a legal or administrative decision: these record sheep promised as *šulmānu* gifts (but not yet delivered) by individuals who in both cases came from outside the town (129; 2028; see Postgate 2002, 303). As in the Urad-Šerua Archive from Aššur,¹⁵ which included 18 *šulmānu* contracts, 2028 at least is a legal, witnessed document (the reverse of 129 is lost), and we must imagine that the creditors would have been promised the “gift” in person, so it is natural for the supporting documentation to have been retained with their private records. That said, even if the obligation in 2028 is a private contract, the gift offered to Mušabši-Adad must have been an inducement to examine the debtor’s case, and the phrase “since he ordered his release, his case was examined”¹⁶ makes it likely that this related to a judicial or at least a public administrative affair, implying that Mušabši-Adad must have had some official status. His father was called Abu-ṭab, but without his grandfather’s name we cannot tell if this was Abu-ṭab (A), who we presume had some official function, or his namesake Abu-ṭab (B).

The admixture of private contracts with official documents is no surprise, since the Urad-Šerua family’s archives at Aššur, although probably found in its private residence, display the same mix, and when we look further west a similar situation is met at Alalaḥ, where officials’ private documents were recovered from the palace buildings. As it happens, the Urad-Šerua family had connections with Karana as well as other north-western towns, and it is possible that both Urad-Šerua and Melisaḥ are mentioned in the 1964 archive (p. 253; Postgate 2002, 307²⁶), but neither at Rimah nor in the Aššur archive is there an explicit statement assigning them any formal administrative role at Karana. Although we know the family was involved in the upper Ḥabur region after its annexation (e.g. at Naḥur and Šuduḥi), it is of course possible that one of its members held a different provincial governorship before this, and along with Addariq and Kurda, Karana is one of the firmly established provinces in the Jebel Sinjar region. However, it remains uncertain whether Rimah was in fact Karana, and so it is equally uncertain whether we should expect there to have been a resident provincial governor at the site. There is no mention of a governor (*bēl pāḥiti*) in the Rimah texts, and if this is indeed our Aššur family, its presence here is more likely to stem from commercial interests, and we remain in the dark as to the state hierarchy in the town.

Relations with the State

Nevertheless, provincial capital or not, a variety of other tablets bear witness to the presence of the state at Rimah. As already mentioned, the palace is mentioned as a creditor in a few

¹⁵ See pp. 248–52 for the *šulmānu* texts in this archive.

¹⁶ *iš-tu 𐎶𐎵 uš-šu-ri-š[u] iq-bi-ú-ni a-ba-su am-rat.*

documents, which implies that government business was transacted, but the majority of texts mentioning state matters are probably to be seen as private legal documents.

These include three tablets (2059; 3019; 3027), unwitnessed but sealed, which record the payment of customs dues (*miksu*).¹⁷ Details are lost in 3027, but in 3019 the sum of 50 minas of lead had been paid as “customs-dues on a 2-year old mare which ... Uballissu-Marduk the merchant brought out from the Nairi Land”.¹⁸ In 2059 the dues are again paid on an animal, though on this occasion it was a mere donkey, and the trader was a Sutilian of the Yurian tribe.

TR 2059¹⁹

1 ANŠE.NÍTA MU.3	1 male donkey, 3-year-old,
ša ^{munus} ša-li-im-te	belonging to Šalimtu,
DUMU.MUNUS ¹ 10-MAŠ ² -ni	daughter of Adad- ... ni,
ša iš-te su-ti-e	which she took from a
⁵ iu-ú-ra-ie-e	Yurian Sutilian,
(x) ta-al-qe-ú-ni	
^{1d} šín-MU-le ² -šèr	Sin-šumu-lešer,
^{lul} ma-ki-su	the tax-collector
i+na ^{uru} qa-ta-ra	in Qatara
¹⁰ e-ta-mar	has seen
im-ti-ki-is ₅	(and) taxed.
(seal impression)	
ITI mu-ḥur-DINGIR.MEŠ UD.19.KÁM	Month of Muḥur-ilani, 19 th day,
li-mu ¹ 10-EN-gab-be	eponymate of Adad-bel-gabbe.

These documents have parallels from other places (see Faist 2001, 184–94); the point to note here is that they would have been retained by the new owner as evidence that he or she had paid the customs duty, and are therefore entirely in place in the owner’s private archives. The same applies to a group of six texts which are all concerned with military service in different ways.²⁰ One deals with the regulation of *ilku* service obligations between two individuals (3010), others are receipts or debt-notes for an assortment of contributions related to *ilku* service: grain and straw as fodder for the horses (3023, 2087), pig fat as ointment for the horses (3023, 2087, 3003), lead as hire of a charioteer (2087) and wool (3005). In 2021(+2051) a spear is borrowed, to be returned *ina tuār ḥurādi* “at the return of” (or: “from”) “the army”, while 3006 records a payment to a *paḥnu*, probably a military substitute.²¹ Again, the point

¹⁷ Additionally 3025 shows us Šadanu-ašared’s sons accepting liability for payment of three obligations, one of which is “the liability for the merchant who taxed the horse which he sold to Šadanu-ašared” (*pa-ḥa-at LÚ.DAM.GĀR ša ANŠE. KUR.RA im-ki-su-ni ša a-na¹KUR.NA-[S]AG i-di-nu-ni*).

¹⁸ Postgate 1983–4, 233b; Faist 2001, 185.

¹⁹ = IM 73557; from my own transcription made in the Iraq Museum, not previously published in full. The names of the father and the tax-collector need collation – the father’s name can hardly be Adad-ašaredni.

²⁰ see on these in more detail Postgate 2002, 302–3.

²¹ For this rare term see p. 22 on KAJ 307.

is that all these documents relate to the personal obligations of the individuals involved, and are therefore at home in a private archive.

This does not contradict the fact that some of the relevant debt-notes are informal, without witnesses or in some cases a seal impression: all we know of the *ilku* system ties the obligations to an individual, but in other archives we have seen that bilateral relations between an administrative entity and individuals in their private capacity could be regulated by relatively informal procedures, so that it is not unreasonable to suppose that the administrative cadre at a town like Rimah was a small circle and that elaborate, legally binding documentation was not always considered necessary.

Summary

To sum up, the Rimah texts derive from family archives. They give what is at present a unique view of the private sector in operation, illustrating the engagement of literate commercial Assyrians in the countryside some distance from the capital city, supplying the other face of the Urad-Šerua coin and serving to counteract any suspicion that Assyrian involvement in the provinces was entirely a state-run venture. It might seem surprising to find a private archive in such an apparently public location as the mound formed around the early second-millennium temple at the centre of the city. The presence of a number of documents, mainly receipts, in which the phrase “in the charge of” (*ša qāt*) probably indicates state involvement, may provide an explanation, suggesting that individual family members carried out government duties which enabled them to keep their documents in public space. This would apply to Abu-ṭab (A), but not to the small 1964 archive (TR100ff.), nor to some of the other principals in the larger archive. Alternatively, the archives may have been moved in a time of unrest from the families’ homes to a more secure location, which could easily have been done if they were stored in jars. This is quite different from the situation with two other provincial archives, those from Tell Billa and Tell Chuera, discussed next: both of these are archives which derive largely from the state activities of the principals, and no doubt also from buildings which provided the forum for those activities. At Rimah also there must somewhere have been many more administrative documents relating to state affairs, and at present it is impossible to guess whether the government buildings were on the central mound, or elsewhere within the walls of the city.

5.2. Tell Billa, Ancient Šibaniba

The Middle Assyrian tablets from Tell Billa number only about 70, and have fared relatively well, having been accessioned by the University of Pennsylvania Museum in 1933 and fully published 20 years later (Finkelstein 1953). Tell Billa, lying north-east of Nineveh, was the provincial capital of Šibaniba and hence the seat of a provincial governor. Two of the governors, bearing the title ḥassihlu, which seems likely to be an earlier equivalent of bēl pāḥiti, were father and son Aššur-kašid and Sin-apla-erīš, and about half of the tablets involve one or other of

them in either a public or a private capacity. Their period of office appears to start in the reign of Adad-nirari I, and none of the texts certainly dates as late as Tukulti-Ninurta, so this batch of tablets is one of the earliest we have. It is not a coherent archive, and the varied content of the texts, evident from the different headings under which they are described in this chapter – letters; private transactions involving grain or lead; public transactions involving grain; issues of cereals and similar products; issues of wooden items; administration of animals and administration of men – is reinforced by the variation within each category. It becomes clear that the tablets include some deriving from the governors' private business transactions, as well as records of the province's affairs, which are principally concerned with the administration and exploitation of agriculture and stockbreeding, and the recruitment and management of military and civilian personnel, some from outside the province. A few letters may reflect the activities of a village inspector (rab ālāni) called Aššur-šuma-iddina, and it makes sense for him to be based at the provincial headquarters.

There are no elaborate internal records here to compare with some of the documentation at Aššur or Durkatlimmu, and the very ordinariness of the texts which survive may reflect their relatively early date, leading to the idea that it was during the long reign of Shalmaneser I that the Assyrian state developed some of its more sophisticated recording habits. In general, though, the Billa documents are in line with those from elsewhere, with administrative liability recorded by the use of formulae borrowed from legal documents, but with less formality in the shape of witnessing and sealing.

The Archive and the Principal Characters

The mound of Tell Billa, lying about 25 kilometres north-east of Nineveh (see map, Figure 2.1, p. 31) and some 10 kilometres due east of Sargon's later capital at Khorsabad, was excavated in the 1930s under the direction of E. A. Speiser for the University of Pennsylvania Museum, and the texts found there identify it as the town of Šibaniba, known to have been a provincial capital in Middle Assyrian times.²² In addition to a few not unimportant 9th-century administrative documents, the excavations yielded at least 70 second-millennium tablets or fragments, edited in Finkelstein 1953, whose numbering with the siglum Bi is followed here.²³ In keeping with normal practice at the time, Finkelstein's edition does not publish details of the seal impressions: this omission has been rectified by Matthews (1991), who not only provides drawings of the visible impressions but addresses the sealing practices with reference to the textual content of the texts. The tablets were mostly found together in a building on the western edge of the mound; we have no more precise details of the find spot(s) but "it is clear that most of the tablets belonged to an archive ... of Aššur-kašid and his son Sîn-apla-eriš, both bearing the title *ḥassihlu*, 'district chief'" (Pedersén 1998, 90).

²² Attestations in Nashef 1982, 247–8. Its status as a provincial capital is indicated by its appearance in the Aššur Temple offerings lists (see Postgate 1985, 99), where the second syllable of the name is not infrequently written *-ma* rather than the expected *-ba*.

²³ Finkelstein's edition gives us Bi 1–67, but this includes Bi 4a, and he mentions at least two unpublished fragments (UM 33–58–26, a letter, see p. 121; UM 33–58–157, see p. 124).

Pedersén also alludes to texts mentioning Aššur-šuma-iddina, and both groups of tablets are roughly contemporary, belonging to the middle of the 13th century. Sin-apla-eriš is already entitled *ḥassiḥlu* in the eponymate of Ša-Adad-ninu, during the reign of Adad-nirari (Bi 31), and is identified as the “*ḥassiḥlu* of Šibaniba” in Bi 25:3 from the eponymate of Shalmaneser. He is still active in the eponymate of Ekaltayu, only about 8 years before the accession of Tukulti-Ninurta, and so covers more than twenty years.²⁴ His father, Aššur-kašid, is also described as a *ḥassiḥlu* but of the district of Bit-Zamani (in Bi 6:8, if the sign É is correctly read); a broken passage in Bi 17 may have described him as the *ḥassiḥlu* of [Šiba]ni[ba]. He is probably identical with the eponym Aššur-kašid, whose year of office is placed at year 2 in Röllig’s list (see Appendix 2), that is twenty-two years before the end of Shalmaneser’s reign. As Finkelstein points out, if Sin-apla-eriš was acting as the *ḥassiḥlu* of Šibaniba in the early years of Shalmaneser’s reign, a period in which his father’s eponymate would have fallen, Aššur-kašid must have held qualifying office for his eponymate somewhere else. Precisely what offices the father and son held, and when, is therefore rather uncertain, but the texts make it clear that they both at times acted as senior administrators at Šibaniba.

Even more than the main group of tablets from Tell al-Rimah, the Billa texts are a very mixed bunch. The variety involved means that many of the texts have to be described individually, which may seem laborious but should provide a realistic picture of the operations of a provincial administration. Finkelstein divided the Middle Assyrian tablets into letters, “private transactions” and “administrative records” (1953, 120), and the miscellaneous texts include two lexical fragments (Bi 56 and 58). Although they do not strictly deserve to be called an archive, and they do not supply a large body of evidence on any one subject, a survey of their contents does convey a vivid impression of the range of activities recorded by a provincial administration relatively early in the Assyrian expansion, and is a useful corrective to the specialist bias of some of the other archives.

Letters

Bi 60 to 67 are all letters, six of them addressed to Aššur-šuma-iddina. His correspondents do not mention his official position, but judging from the opening formula in some of the letters addressed to him, “I have done obeisance. I have gone as a substitute for my lord” (*ultaka’in ana dinān bēliya attalak*²⁵), he must have been in the upper echelons of the administrative hierarchy, and this agrees with the title of village inspector (*rab ālāni*) he is given in Bi 48 listing troops. It is quite likely that the holder of this post would have been based at the provincial capital and the subjects of his correspondence are not incompatible with an official with responsibilities in the countryside, although this does not prove that he held this post at

²⁴ Finkelstein (following Weidner) assigned Bi 23 and Bi 30 to the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta, but Ekaltayu (formerly read Eribtayu) is now placed at 16, and Ištār-eriš son of Salmanu-qarrad at 13 in Röllig’s list (see Appendix 2), well within the reign of his father.

²⁵ For this introductory formula in Middle Assyrian letters see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 56–9.

the time any individual letter was written.²⁶ Of his correspondents the introductory formulae of Bi 61, which is concerned with weavers and textiles, and Bi 65, mentioning ploughs, suggest that these authors were approximately of the same rank as him, while the brusque introduction and peremptory imperatives in Bi 66 confirm that the Aššur-kašid who sent it was indeed the provincial governor himself. The three remaining letters are from correspondents who address him as “my lord” and must be below him in the hierarchy. Bi 63 is a request for clearance from Aššur-šuma-iddina for the author to continue his pursuit of a fugitive, while Bi 62 and 64 are both from Rabu-Sebetti, who is evidently a subordinate directly answerable to Aššur-šuma-iddina, and concern forest workers and grinding flour (Bi 62), and ploughs and threshing sledges (*namšarāte*) along with other topics lost in the breaks (Bi 64). This small group of letters therefore suggests (a) that the village inspector fell under the authority of the local governor; (b) that his official documentation was kept in or adjacent to the house (or palace) of the governor himself; (c) that he had at least one subordinate official, possibly a chief farmer (*rab ekkārāte*); and (d) that his business involved the administration of agriculture and forestry.

Bi 67 is a letter to an official called Kurbanu from a superior based at Nineveh, requiring him to send a woman. It is mentioned here because it is the only letter, and indeed the only Billa tablet, whose envelope was recovered (see Matthews 1991, 31 on no. 34).

Private Transactions Involving Grain

These documents can be recognised as legal, that is dealing with the principals’ private affairs, because they were witnessed, with patronymics invariably, and grandparents’ names occasionally given (e.g. Bi 2; 3).

Bi 1: grain owed by two debtors; the creditor appears to be Aššur-uma’i but with Sin-apla-eriš acting on his behalf (*ša qāt S.*). The transaction is witnessed, and bears two different seal impressions (Matthews nos. 15 and 29), though no captions, and there is no indication that this is other than a private deal.

Bi. 3, 4, 4a: Bi 3 is to all appearances a purely private loan of 12 homers of grain with Sin-apla-eriš as creditor and two different seal impressions (Matthews nos. 16 and 25); Bi 4 and 4a are fragmentary but come from very similar documents.

Bi. 5: this apparently unsealed grain loan is to Aššur-kašid, who provides a field in lieu of interest (i.e. an antichretic loan). This may of course be more of a commercial venture to get the field cultivated than a sign of a shortage of capital.

Bi 10: debt-note for grain, owed by both Sin-apla-eriš and his brother Urad-ilišu. Although no creditor is mentioned, this may have been a private transaction because two brothers are involved and the transaction is witnessed. Pace Finkelstein, the phrase “he shall break his tablet” is not restricted to administrative documents (cf. for example TR 110 from Tell al-Rimah). The tablet was sealed with the same seal as Bi 2 (Matthews no. 18), whose owner must therefore be Sin-apla-eriš.

²⁶ In Bi 61 his correspondent Mušallim-[...] introduces his letter with *ana pāḫiti-ka lu šulmu* (and a similar phrase must be restored in Bi 65:4–5 [*ana*] *Ē-ka [p]a-ḫi-ti-ka*), but this should be taken (with CAD P 361) in a general sense to mean “may it be well with your office” rather than “with your province”.

Bi 16: sealed and witnessed tablet concerning 5 homers of grain owed by “Aššur-kašid, son of Bel-qarrad, the *ḥassihlu*”.

Bi. 57: witnessed and possibly sealed. Document concerning grain with Aššur-kašid involved as the debtor similarly to *Bi 16*.

Most if not all of these documents relate to the private family business of Aššur-kašid and Sin-apla-eriš his son. In *Bi 1* and *3*, Sin-apla-eriš is the creditor, as we should expect, and it is more difficult to explain why *Bi 9*, *16* and *57*, in which Aššur-kašid appears to be the debtor, and *Bi 10*, where two of his sons are, should have ended up in the family’s own archive.

Private Transactions Concerning Lead

Three tablets mention apparently private transactions involving lead. These are *Bi 2* in which Sin-apla-eriš is the debtor, *Bi 9*, where he seems to have paid off a debt of 1 talent of lead on behalf of his brother, and *Bi 19* which is badly damaged but is probably also a receipt attesting that a debt of Sin-apla-eriš has been paid off, and stating that the original debt-note should now be considered invalid.²⁷ Like the private grain transactions, these show that some of the family’s personal documentation was kept with the administrative documents. *Bi 28* listing amounts of lead and grain “in the charge of (*ina qāt*)” individuals perhaps belongs here, on the private side of Aššur-kašid’s activities, because lead does not usually feature as a currency in this way in administrative contexts, and people could no doubt take charge of commodities when acting for other individuals as well as for the public institutions.

Public Transactions Concerning Grain

The salient feature of this group is its sheer variety: no doubt there were once documents similar to all of these in the governor’s archives, but the remaining sample has left us with a range of unique transactions.

Bi 6: debt-note for grain to be paid, presumably by Aššur-kašid (who here bears the title *ḥassihlu* of Bet-Zamani), though the text is too broken for certainty. It is not witnessed or sealed, and ll. 14–18 confirm that this is a public transaction because it involves a payment made by the royal representatives (*qēpūtu ša šarri*), “for the ... of Šibaniba”,²⁸ “for pasturage” (*a-na re-ú-te*).

Bi 11: here it seems Sin-apla-eriš, given his title of *ḥassihlu*, is issuing the grain to Athi-nada on the instructions (*ana šipirte*) of a “royal servant, in charge of gifts (*šulmāni*)”. The transaction is witnessed, which is understandable if Athi-nada was not another official but here acting as a private recipient of royal generosity. However, the phrase *pāḥat ... zakkūè Athi-nada naši* “A. bears the responsibility for

²⁷ Using the phrase “that tablet, wherever it turns up, is invalid and proper to be broken” (see Tell al Rimah, p. 263).

²⁸ In l. 15 the tablet has *a-na is- 'x' ša Šibaniba*. The sign after *is* was not deciphered by Finkelstein. I am tempted to compare this with *Bi 23:8–9* which appears to me to read *is-qa ú-ša-d[an]*. The undeciphered sign could well be *qa*, but this is not expected after *ana*, and it would be hard for the copied traces to belong to *is-qi* or *is-qí* (collation by G. Frame and a photo kindly supplied by him confirm the accuracy of Finkelstein’s copy, leaving a reading of *qa* as plausible as any other, and certainly ruling out *qi* or *qí*).

clearing the grain (of claims)” may rather imply that he also had an administrative role and is not the end-user. There are two different seal impressions (Matthews nos. 1 and 28), one presumably belonging to a witness.

Bi 13: The tablet is probably here because of the involvement of Aššur-kašid, who at some stage had a liability for the grain. It is too broken to determine the exact roles of the persons mentioned, but it is a receipt for grain issued to someone “in accordance with the directive tablet (*ana pī tuppi našperte*) of Aššur-šadu-nišešu”, and in other contexts such directives are administrative letter orders (see pp. 67–9). It has three seal impressions, two of which presumably belong to the witnesses, whose presence may reflect the fact that this transaction involved outside parties.

Bi 18: a receipt for 4 homers of grain belonging to the palace, in the charge of Aššur-eriš, with the clause prescribing that the original tablet is invalid (as in *Bi 10*). Typical informal bilateral administrative document, sealed (Matthews no. 18), but with no witnesses, and no filiation for Aššur-eriš.

Bi 30: unsealed receipt for 2 homers of grain belonging to the palace, “which the men of Šibaniba had underpaid (*imṭūni*)”.²⁹ Sin-apla-eriš was involved, though in quite what capacity is lost in the breaks, and the grain is described as *mulā'u ša karū'e* “complementary payment of the grain heaps”. The phrase *mulā'u [ša ēk]alli* is found in *Bi 27* referring to a grain payment, and in each case the nuance is that this payment completes an obligation to the government.

Issue of Materials: Cereals and Similar Products

Bi 7 and 8: receipts for grain issued to flour worker for a feast’ (*tākultu*).³⁰ These two similar documents record the receipt of 1 or 2 homers of grain by an *alahḫinu*, who is obliged to see to the consumption of the grain and render an account of how it was consumed (*ana tākulte ... ušakkal nikkassē iṣabbat u tuppūšu iḫappi*).³¹ The grain is explicitly stated to be the property of the palace, in the charge of (*ša qāt*) Aššur-kašid, and neither transaction was witnessed. Each tablet was sealed, with a different seal as there were two different recipients (Matthews nos. 26 and 23).

Bi 12: The palace overseer of the town of Ḫašuanī has received cereal products from three named individuals for the royal camp in the army (coming?) from the land of Katmuḫi. He is probably required to compile accounts before breaking his tablet, although only the word *iṣabbat* survives from this clause; compare *Bi 7* and *8* and p. 69). Though apparently not sealed or witnessed, this resembles a distribution contract.

Bi 15 and 40: The *alahḫinu* is also involved in *Bi 15*, which is a transaction concerned with a contract tablet for 30 homers, broken but clearly with bilateral force since it was sealed (Matthews no. 21). *Bi 40* also mentions an *alahḫinu* and large quantities of grain “for grinding”.

Bi 20: this badly broken unsealed tablet concerns a document recording an obligation on Aššur-kašid, the governor ([*h*]assiḫ[*li*]), relating to material which someone had “issued to the inspected(?) royal(?)

²⁹ This is not a scribal error for *imṭudūni* (pace Finkelstein ad loc. and CAD M/ii.188b): the verb *maṭū(m)* means “to be owing, in arrears, in default”, and of course relates to the term *muṭ(t)ā'u* “arrears”, often written with LÁ(.MEŠ). Cf. MARV 2 20:18 (grain) *um-ta-í la ub-la* “he has underpaid (and) did not bring” (the grain), or TR 3011: equipment which was lost (and) the men of PLN ... are owing” (*im-ṭū-ni*).

³⁰ For this word, provisionally translated “feast” at Durkatlimmu see p. 322 with footnote 132.

³¹ In the light of *tākultu*, and parallels in the Offering Archive, we must read here *ú-ša-kal* (from *akālu* “to consume”) rather than *ú-ša-dan*.

troops in the farmstead of Sinniya”³² The substance was probably grain as ll.18–20 state that “the responsibility for replacing the grain (*pāḥat šallume* [š]a ŠE¹ [written KUR, coll. G. Frame & photo])” is to be borne by Šamaš-kidinnu.

Bi 23: Straw delivery. An undated, unsealed and unwitnessed text stating that from a certain date a “chief farmer of the town of Riš[a...] shall regularly arrange for the delivery of an allocation (*ana maldi is-qa ušadd[an]*) of 2½ bales of straw daily”. The straw is “in the charge of PN, from the straw-stack (TA² *kurdiše*)”. This is clearly an internal administrative note, since, for example, it does not specify to whom the straw is to be delivered. The signs *is-qa* were not read by Finkelstein, but the copy looks clear, and the word *isqu* is attested at Chuera (Jakob 2009 No. 17:9), and perhaps in Bi 6:15 (see footnote 28); in MARV 9.55:4 there is an “official in charge of lots” (*ša UGU is₅(EŠ)-qa-t[e]*). In general in socio-economic circumstances the Akkadian word, which means originally “lot” can refer to an allocation received; it seems conceivable that it could also refer to an obligation to pay, determined by lot. In any case, this is very clearly an administrative arrangement, and the fact that the tablet was found at Tell Billa suggests that the straw was intended for the use of the provincial governor.

Bi 29: Wheat and emmer belonging to Sin-apla-eriš are received by a confectioner (*kakardinnu*) for processing (*ana šēšuri maḥir*). Sealed, presumably by the confectioner, but not witnessed (cf. Bi 25).

Bi 31–3: Three receipts of grain by Ištar-pilaḥ. The grain (2 homers; 3 homers; [x homers]) is destined for rations (ŠUKU) for horses. Bi 31 dates to the reign of Adad-nirari. Bi 33 was sealed by Ištar-pilaḥ himself, but Bi 31 and 32 each had a different seal impression, presumably belonging to one of the two witnesses in Bi 31, and possibly to a witness in Bi 32, whose reverse is lost (see Matthews 1991, 21). The presence of witnesses may mean that Ištar-pilaḥ is not a member of the local administration. Similar texts recording the issue of grain to citizens as fodder for horses are known at Rimah (TR 2087, 3023 see p. 267) and Aššur, here as early as the 14th century (KAJ 233 with KAV 207), in each case associated with *ilku*, suggesting that the state regularly issued fodder to individuals who maintained horses for service in the army.

Bi 35: An informal, unsealed and unwitnessed record of two amounts of the commodity *abuḥuru*, the first issued as “rations of the chariot-men”, if Jakob’s reading of LÜ.GIŠ.GIGIR.MEŠ (2003, 212) is correct, the second received by a gentleman named Lullayū.³³

Bi 41–5: Short informal memoranda noting issues of cereal products: grain to be ground (in separate amounts totalling some 80 homers, Bi 40), or to a named individual (Bi 44), quantities of grain and flour (Bi 45), or just flour (Bi 42), quantities of bread for troops (Bi 41) or for the Adad temple (Bi 43). All unwitnessed, unsealed and undated.

Issue of Materials: Wooden Items

Bi 22: Document relating to a pine wood door (l. 3: *ša* ^{giš}[*m*]e-*eh*-[*ri*]). The person sealing the document (and therefore presumably liable in some way for this item) was a woman, but the remainder of the text is lost (and an impression was not recorded by Matthews).

³² Reading here ¹³ *a-na* ÉRIN.MEŠ L[UGAL¹] ¹⁴ *ba-ri-¹ú²-[te²]*. The term *bari’u* is found in MARV I 1.iv.33, and also in Col. i.52’ of the same text on an additional fragment published in Freydank 1985, 232; etymology suggests that it must mean either “hungry” (so Freydank ad loc.) or “inspected”, the latter of which seems more plausible. (On a photo and after collation by G. Frame the first two wedges of L[UGAL] are even clearer than in Finkelstein’s copy, and agree very well with the LUGAL in Bi 11:8).

³³ The proposal in CAD A/i, 81a to emend to a form like *abuḥušinnu*, is made unnecessary by the repeated occurrence of the form *a-bu-uh-ru* in a text from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (MARV 4.51).

Bi 25: this is an atypically well-preserved administrative receipt, worth quoting in full because it comes from as early as the accession year of Shalmaneser.

1 *ši-mi-tu ša* ^{gš}*ša-ku-li*
ša ŠU ^{1.d}*šin*-DUMU.ŪS-KAM
^{lū}*ha-siḫ-li* ^{uruš}*[i-b]a-ni-be*
¹DŪG.GA-*mil-ki-a-bi* DUMU ^{1.d}UTU-*ke-nu*
⁵*ša* ^{gš}*nam-ša-ra-te*
ša Ē.GAL-*lim*
a-na iš-ka-ri-šu
ma-ḫi-ir
[IG]I *ba-aq²-nu*
¹⁰ [DUMU] ^dUTU-*li-ki-na-ni*
IGI ĪR-DINGIR-*šu* DUB.SAR
DUMU ^d*a-šur*-KUR-*id*
ITI *ša-sa-ra-te*
UD.15.KÁM *li-mu*
¹⁵ ^{1.d}DI-*ma-nu*-SAG LUGAL

1 yoke(?) of *šakkullu* wood,
in the charge of Sin-apla-eriš,
governor of Šibanibe,
Ṭab-milki-abi, son of Šamaš-kenu,
the threshing-sledge specialist
of the Palace,
for his work-assignment
has received.
[Befo]re Baqu,
[son of] Šamaš-kinnanni.
Before Urad-ilišu the scribe,
son of Aššur-kašid.
Month of Ša-sarrate,
15th day, eponymate of
Salmanu-ašared, the king.

This is a work contract between the governor and a local craftsman, who is said to belong to the palace, and sealed by him (Matthews no. 2). It is therefore in a sense an internal document, and it may be the formality attached to the *iškāru* work-assignment tradition which occasions the use of witnesses. Note that the scribe may be the governor's brother. Whether the item issued to Ṭab-milki-abi is indeed a yoke, which seems inappropriate as raw material for a threshing sledge, or *šimittu* here and in Bi 26 rather means a "set" remains unclear (see p. 160 on Stewards' Archive No. 12).

Bi 26: Sin-apla-eriš issues to Ḫubarzi, a donkey-herd (*[r]e-di* ANŠE!) "9 homers of grain (and) 3 'yo[kes?]' of *šakkullu* wood, in accordance with the instruction (*a-na ši-pí[r²-ti/e]*) of P[N] the cow-herd (^{lū}*ú-tu-li*)". This is a sealed bilateral administrative transaction (Matthews no. 22), and the two witnesses may be present because of the involvement of a third party, the cow herd whose instructions are being carried out; cf. Bi 13, where the outside incentive for the transaction comes from a "directive" (*našpertu*).

Bi 46: A very brief unsealed note of an arrow (*šiltāhu*) and some other pieces of equipment "in the charge of Šamaš-nadin-aḫi [<son of>] Amranni-Šamaš".

Administration of Animals

Here again there is nothing remotely systematic about this mixed bunch of texts relating in one way or another to domestic animals.

Bi 21: A debt-note for two sheep and a quantity of wool owed to Aššur-kašid by the mayor (*ḫaziānu*) of Ḫubite. The transaction was apparently unsealed and unwitnessed, and the sheep are "under the charge of" (*ša qāt*) Aššur-kašid, the governor and (temporarily) "in the charge of" (*i[na] qāt*) the mayor, signalling that each person is functioning in his administrative capacity.

Bi 24: Fragmentary document prescribing that a certain Urḫi-Tešup "will give a cow" (GU₄.ĀB *i-da-an*), perhaps after stating that Sin-apla-eriš is free of claims. Although the tablet is witnessed, Matthews does not report any seal impression.

Bi 36: List of sheep and goats associated with 5 PNs, all with Akkadian names. The tablet is sealed, but with breaks in the text it is difficult to guess by whom.

Bi 37: Receipt by Sin-našir² of 1 male sheep under the charge of Aššur-kašid.

Bi 47 and 50: 28 farmsteads (*dunnu*) are listed in *Bi 47*, with the sadly obscure summary *an-nu-tu* [š]a URU UDU.MEŠ¹⁻⁴ IM-tiš-mar ma-ḫi-ir. *Bi 50* is a similar fragment listing *dunnu*. Despite the obscurity it is plain that this is a unilateral record prepared by the local administration for its internal purposes. It is included here because there appears to be a mention of sheep in the summary, but this may be entirely fallacious. Nevertheless it underlines the provincial centre's role in relation to rural settlements.

Administration of Men

With the exception of the Tell Chuera texts and some of the Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta documents which have lost their archaeological provenance, documents recording people are relatively uncommon in the other Middle Assyrian archives. Some of the texts listed in this section relate to the state's military administration, with a broader horizon than just the province of Šibaniba, and they give a glimpse of how the provincial governments must have interacted with the central administration. They are all internal memoranda, and accordingly none of them is sealed.

Bi 39, 52: Lists of male personal names, predominantly Akkadian.

Bi 48: List of 193 men, probably “missing” (LÁ), in the charge of Aššur-šuma-iddina, village inspector (LÚ.GAL URU.DIDLI). Numbers of men are listed against seven different place names, including Šibaniba, but also Adiu (cf. *Bi 49*), which may have been, and the province (*ḫal-zu*) of Ekallate, which must have been, outside Šibaniba province.

Bi 49: List of 204 “resident” (*usbūtu*) men probably connected with a campaign against Ḫanigalbat. Of at least eight home towns listed only the name Adiu survives. The summation probably should be read: ¹⁰ ŠU.NIGÍN 2 ME 4 ÉRIN.MEŠ¹¹ *us-bu-tu ša a-na* ¹² <<a-na>> ^{[ur]u}ḫa-ni-gal-bat¹³ X¹⁴ ú-še-ʿli¹⁵ ú-ni “Total: 204 men, resident, whom they made go up country² to Ḫanigalbat”. Unfortunately the precise implications of *ušābu* in a military context are not obvious from this passage.³⁴

Bi 51: List of men (two with their sons) under a decurion (“Commander of 10 men”, GAL 10 ÉRIN.MEŠ). Their names are all linguistically Akkadian.

Bi 53–5: Lists of PNs with city names, but too broken to explain their function. We can only say that these men must be listed together for the purposes of government.

Summary

The Middle Assyrian archive from Tell Billa derives from the seat of administration of the governor of Šibaniba province in the 13th century. Not all the 65 documents directly involve

³⁴ For l. 13 Finkelstein had [ḫar]rāna? ú-še-šē[r?]-ú-ni, but [i] looks epigraphically at least as probable, and avoids the awkward writing with a hiatus after šēr. At the beginning of the line the two diagonals are certain after collation (G. Frame and photo) but there is no trace of the horizontals expected in [KAS]KAL. There is only space for a single sign, therefore a logogram; epigraphically [K]UR looks a possibility.

the governor in person, but at least 27 mention either Aššur-kašid or his son Sin-apla-eriš, sometimes with the title *ḥassihlu*, and of these some eight are transactions concerned with their private affairs. Thus as at Tell al-Rimah the private and public records of some of the administrators are stored together, though in this case the majority of the texts relates to their public administrative activities.

The collection recovered by the Pennsylvania team also included correspondence addressed to Aššur-šuma-iddina, a man who was, for a time at least, a village inspector, and it seems likely enough that although responsible for government relations with the rural settlements he too was based at Šibaniba. Other officials operating from provincial headquarters may have included Aššur-eriš, who is in charge of palace grain in Bi 18, and Šamaš-nadin-ahi, in charge of a weapon in No. 46, but characteristically their title, and in Aššur-eriš's case at least their patronymic, is not given.

Although the Billa Archive lacks the suites of administrative records provided by Durkatlimmu or Tell Chuera, its range correlates well with the expected concerns of a provincial governor. The general impression we receive is that of a rural manor: in one way or another most documents remind us that the town is embedded in the rural landscape. While elsewhere the government no doubt maintained an agricultural enterprise of its own, contributions were also expected from the populace (Bi 30): it is not clear if these were the result of tenancy agreements by which the farmers were allowed to till state-owned fields in return for a share of the crop, or a direct tax on their harvest yields. We do not encounter (here or elsewhere in the Middle Assyrian documentation) the later Assyrian words for “grain tax” (*šibšu*) and “straw tax” (*nusāhē*), and it would be rash to assume such taxes were levied without clear evidence for it. Whether Bi 47 should be taken to show that the villages also supplied sheep to the provincial centre is uncertain. Even in cases where the palace is concluding a bilateral agreement with a specialist worker, he is either a processor of cereal products – an *alahhinu* (Bi 15; 40) or a *kakardinnu* (Bi 29) – or a maker of agricultural equipment – the threshing sledge craftsman in Bi 25. As for stock breeding, if the list of villages in Bi 47 should be taken to imply that each was supplying a sheep, which is far from certain, this sounds more like a form of taxation or levy than part of a state stock-breeding enterprise, and there is no clear evidence for craft activity which is not serving the army or agriculture, and in particular no sign of textile production.

On general grounds we would expect the provincial authorities to have responsibilities for the army within the province. They must have maintained some kind of census of the village populations and have been expected to conscript them for service, whether under the *ilku* system or some other constraint. Echoes of this are perhaps to be recognised in the grain rations issued to soldiers in Bi 12 and perhaps Bi 20, bread in Bi 41 and the unidentified commodity *abuḥru* to chariot troops (if the reading is correct) in Bi 45. The rations received by Ištar-pilaḥ for his horses (Bi 31–3) must also be part of the army scene, as also the arrow and other equipment noted in Bi 46. However, the formal basis for these different transactions is nowhere spelled out, and for us it must remain unclear whether in each case it was part of the province's normal arrangements or in response to an ad hoc demand from the central military authorities. This could have included accommodating and provisioning military units

from elsewhere which found themselves within the boundaries of the province, and in Bi 12 we seem to have army units coming into the province from Katmuḫi to the north, while some of the groups in Bi 48 also originate from outside the province. In Bi 49, on the other hand, it seems likely that men from the province are going off west to Ḫanigalbat.

The administrative practices and documentary formats are broadly in line with what we see elsewhere, although in some respects less rigid, perhaps because the Billa texts are some years or even decades earlier. Thus we can recognise the familiar criteria distinguishing legal from administrative documents. The legal texts are regularly sealed and witnessed, in some instances identifying the principals by not only the father's but also the grandfather's name (e.g. Bi 9 and 10). By contrast bilateral administrative texts, although they use the same basic vocabulary to express liabilities, need have only the debtor's seal (typically without a caption) and may be unwitnessed, such as for example the work contract Bi 25, or contracts to carry out an administrative task which will be fulfilled by presenting accounts (Bi 7–8 and perhaps also Bi 12). On the other hand, in a few cases a plainly administrative bilateral document does have witnesses: this may be because the party with whom the governor's office is dealing was not within its own circle, but either from another locality (see on Bi 11, 13 and Bi 26) or functioning as a private individual (as perhaps in the case of Iṣṭar-pilaḫ in Bi 31–3).³⁵ In the case of Bi 29 it is possibly because of the formality of the *iškāru* system, which may have the same effect much later in the Offerings Archive (see p. 138). None of the texts directly concerned with the administration of men is sealed, and the variety of detail combined with an absence of any regular formulae, which makes some of them difficult to understand, no doubt reflects the unpredictability of military events.

5.3. Tell Chuera, Ancient Ḫarbu

Both the tablets³⁶ and the site itself at Tell Chuera are eloquent witnesses to the process of territorial annexation practised by the Middle Assyrian state. Perched on the northern rim of an ancient mound, the Assyrian administrative building in which the archive was discovered must have overlooked the early forerunner of the E5 leading across the jezirah from the Euphrates at Carchemish to the Tigris at Aššur. This provides an instantly plausible context for the well-preserved directives in which the local officials at Ḫarbu and other places along the route are charged with facilitating the passage of diplomatic missions from western lands beyond the Euphrates – including envoys from Amurru, Sidon and the Hittites (p. 282) – requiring issues of grain and other cereal products, including beer for the humans and grain for the animals. At Ḫarbu they were also required to issue essential supplies to Assyrians travelling on state business (and their animals). Their instructions sometimes came from Durkatlimmu, which was the seat of the Chief Chancellor, an office which seems to have carried with it responsibility for the former lands of Ḫanigalbat recently wrested off the Mittanian dynasty, and sometimes

³⁵ Cf. Matthews 1991, 21 for comment on the possible distinctions between witnessed and unwitnessed administrative documents.

³⁶ Published in Jakob 2009 in a definitive edition using the initial work of Cord Kühne.

from the governor of Waššukanni, which was the former Mittanian capital and closer to Tell Chuera.

Some of the archive consists of lists of rations issued by the local staff. One group of about 30 recipients seems likely to have constituted the full complement of government officials, including farm managers, since they appear in another list associated with small (2 iku ~ 0.7 ha) prebendary landholdings. Other lists record issues to entire families, both Assyrian and, rather unexpectedly, Elamite. Each family receives a grain ration appropriate to its members, and also grain for seed and for its plough oxen, following the procedure already encountered on the Ḫabur (see p. 245). There the families were “deportees” (našḫūtu), and at Chuera one group is explicitly described as “booty” (šallutu), but it seems unlikely that this would be the case for either the Assyrian or the Elamite families. In any case, what is crystal clear is that the state is here engaging in a deliberate policy of agricultural development and importing human resources with this end in mind.

Even apart from the sealed directives already mentioned, the documentary formats at Tell Chuera display unusual features. The tablets of three of the ration lists had been impressed all over with a cylinder seal before being inscribed, and there is reason to think that this functioned as proof of the authorisation of a highly placed member of the administration, a practice which may not be attested at Aššur at present but has parallels at Nuzi and Alalah. There were just three sealed debt-notes also, and these conform to the general pattern of relatively informal administrative transactions without witnesses. One of them is a delivery contract for sesame going to Nineveh and contains a clause requiring the debtors to have a case-tablet (kiširtu) drawn up as proof of their fulfilment of the task, and this provides a helpful parallel to the instructions, which are included in the text of some of the directives, for having their performance of their task recorded on a case-tablet (see p. 71).

The Site

The site of Tell Chuera lies in the upper jezirah, between the headwaters of the Ḫabur and Baliḫ, approximately 50 kilometres west of Tell Fakhariyah, ancient (W)aššukanni, and an equal distance to the west of Tell Sahlan on the Baliḫ. It consists of a large approximately circular mound surrounded by a city wall, both dating to the third millennium BC. During the earlier second millennium it was largely if not entirely deserted, and the Mittanian settlement (Stratum IIA) was therefore effectively a new foundation, no doubt placed there in view of its strategic location on a major route, attested by some of the documents recovered from the following Assyrian occupation.³⁷ The Assyrian buildings (Stratum IIB) were positioned on the high north-western part of the central tell and during their time the town was known as Ḫarbu (possibly “ruins”).³⁸ The two highest building levels here were relatively unimpressive and poorly preserved, but the first building of the Assyrian occupation, which rested directly

³⁷ See recently Jakob 2009, 1–3; Tenu 2009, 94–7.

³⁸ Normally rendered as Ḫarbe, but the name usually stands in the genitive, and the expected nominative form – if it is construed as an Akkadian word – of *ḫar-bu* is attested at least once (Jakob 2009, No. 23); cf. Jakob 2009, 4² on the reading of the first syllable of the name.

reign of Tukulti-Ninurta I. The majority of the tablets were found in groups in a square room (Room 26 [also referred to as Room 3]). Fifty-two pieces were lying over the floor on the western side of the room, and these seem to be mixed in respect of both their date and their content. Group 3, however, consisted of 23 letters and administrative documents which deal predominantly with diplomatic matters, and the dated tablets are with one exception all from the eponym Ninuayu. They were found in a niche in the northern wall of the room, and it is reasonable to suppose that this group remained together in its proper place of storage. Jakob's suggestion that the rest of the tablets, which overlap in date and content with Group 3, may also have been stored here, perhaps on shelves, and had become muddled as they fell to the floor appears entirely plausible, though not of course provable. Other tablets were scattered in small numbers in other rooms: 4 in Room 29 and 1 in Room 28, narrow spaces separated from Room 26 by light partition walls, and 7 pieces in Rooms 13, 20 and 21, some 10 metres or more further north, in a part of the building whose relationship to Room 26 is obscured for us by later disturbance. The broad picture seems clear: Room 26 served as a repository for most of the documents found, but it is hardly possible to say whether the outlying pieces had been dispersed from the same room or were at some point in use in or near the rooms in which they were found.⁴⁰ Perhaps it is reasonable to think of Room 26 as an administrative office, not devoted exclusively to storing tablets, but keeping them there once written or received.⁴¹ It is impossible to say whether we are looking at the entire assemblage of tablets present in the building when it went out of use. While the building was not destroyed by fire, the condition of one face of many of the tablets suggests that they may have been exposed to the weather for a while, before the construction of Level 2 (Jakob 2009, 3), and obviously there are many other reasons the tablets we have would be only a fraction of the original holdings. Nevertheless, the context is architecturally delimited, there are regularities in the content of the texts themselves and no clear chronological divisions and it is fair to treat the whole body of the texts as belonging in a single administrative entity.

The Diplomatic Letters

Undoubtedly the most distinctive body of texts from Tell Chuera is a series of letters and related texts concerned with making provision for the men and animals passing through the town of Harbu on state business. The mound was evidently on a main route linking the lands west of Assyria with (W)aššukanni and thence with the Assyrian heartland. Texts 22–8 are letters from Salmanu-muṣabši, identified as the holder of the office of Chief Chancellor (*sukkallu rabiū*), based at Durkatlimmu.⁴² They are addressed to certain provincial governors:

⁴⁰ See Jakob 2009, 215 for texts 29, 30 (in Room 6 [Room 13 on the plan]), and 60, 85 and 86 (Room 21), which seem to belong in content and prosopography with the main Room 26 group.

⁴¹ Jakob draws attention to the similarities between Room 26 here, and the room which housed the archive of the governor Ušur-bel-šarra at Aššur (Miglus 1996, 256f.; 1999, Tafel 51, Abb 249; Pedersén 1985, 113 archive M12), both rooms standing in a similar relationship to a long reception room into which the main entrance of the building leads.

⁴² For Salmanu-muṣabši see Jakob 2003, 57; 2009, 5¹⁴. He is mentioned three times in the correspondence from Durkatlimmu (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, Nos. 9:19; 31:6'; 35:1), and at least twice in administrative texts from there with the title *sukkallu rabiū* (ibid., 146¹¹³).

22–4 to the governor of Ḥarbu itself, 25 to the governor of Amimu and 26 to the governor of Saḥlala. Evidently the letters were sent out westwards together, and those addressed to Amimu and Saḥlala never reached their destination.⁴³ Each of the tablets was sealed, and then enclosed in an envelope bearing an approximately duplicate text and also sealed with the same seal, no doubt that of Salmanu-muṣabši, impressed on the clay before the text was inscribed.⁴⁴ All of them have identical subjects and very similar presentation.⁴⁵ Unusually, they are not addressed to anyone by name, instead the addressee is given as “governor of X”, as though the author did not know their names.⁴⁶ They were all written in the eponymate of Ninuayu, Nos. 24–6 on 11th Qarratu, and Nos. 22–3 on 20th Kalmartu, some 40 days later. At the end of each of Nos. 22–6, below a ruling, we have the single entry: “Šamaš-mudammeq, allocation-official” (*ša piqitte*).⁴⁷ Each gives instructions to a local governor to allocate to dignitaries passing through his city or province the necessities of their journey. The recipients are foreign envoys, designated as *ubru* (roughly “visiting foreigner”) on their way back from a mission to the Assyrian king in Aššur. They are: Milki-ramu from Sidon, who brought tablets from the Egyptian king (No. 22);⁴⁸ Iabnan, the Amorite, who brought tablets and a consignment (*šēbultu*) (No. 23); and Teli-Šarruma, the Hittite envoy, also carrying tablets and a consignment (Nos. 24–6). Although he is also referred to simply as an *ubru*, Teli-Šarruma is likely to be a prince of that name known from other contexts,⁴⁹ and it is noteworthy that he receives a more elaborate allocation than the others. In Nos. 22, 23 and 28, the regular allocation seems to be bread and beer, with grain as fodder for horses and donkeys. By contrast, in No. 24 (at Ḥarbu), No. 25 (at Amimu) and No. 26 (at Saḥlala), Teli-Šarruma is to receive

⁴³ That this was due to political disruption in the region, as suggested by C. Kühne, is cast in doubt by Jakob 2009, 5, where he shows that even six months after the 20th Kalmartu state travellers were being provisioned from Ḥarbu. Saḥlala is thought to lie on the Baliḥ (possibly Tell Sahlān), see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 103 on l. 43. The location of Amimu remains uncertain; presumably west of (W)aššukanni (with Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 102 on No. 2:23), and of Ḥarbu. On the other hand, if Saḥlala is correctly located on the Baliḥ, Amimu seems more likely to be either further east (i.e. between Ḥarbu and the Baliḥ), or further west (i.e. between the Baliḥ and the Euphrates at Carchemish), since both places feature on Teli-Šarruma’s itinerary (unless they were alternative routes, and letters to both places were issued in the knowledge that one might not be used).

⁴⁴ This seal is a classic Middle Assyrian contest scene, and is found at Durkatlimmu where he was presumably based (D. I. Janisch-Jakob in Jakob 2009, 186–8, Motiv 6). It is not entirely clear whether the seal was “pre-rolled” as a “watermark” (Wasserzeichen) on both the tablet and the envelope, but I think this is implied.

⁴⁵ Formal sealed letters of this kind were referred to in Assyrian as *našpertu* (see pp. 67–9; Postgate 1986b, 26, and for more detail and confirmation Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 142–3).

⁴⁶ Like both Saḥlala and Ḥarbu, Amimu is not attested as a provincial capital in other contexts (e.g. the Offerings Archive), and one is inclined to wonder whether the title of *bēl pāḫiti* in letters 22–6 really means that these three towns were provincial capitals, or the title is rather to be understood as “the competent authorities”. However, it is equally reasonable at present to see the absence of these province names in later texts as a result of the weakening of Assyrian control over the territory west of the Ḥabur during the 12th century.

⁴⁷ For *piqittu* “an allocation (of food and drink)” in Middle Assyrian texts see CAD P, 389b. This usage is found in a letter from Durkatlimmu concerned with making provision for members of the Assyrian and Kassite royal households on the occasion of their visit (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 10).

⁴⁸ Another envoy from Sidon who brought tablets and a consignment to the king is mentioned in No. 28, dated to the twenty-fifth day of a month whose name is broken.

⁴⁹ For a prince Teli-Šarruma of the Hittite dynasty at Carchemish, mentioned twice in texts from Ugarit (PRU 4, 108–9) see Kühne 1995, 211.

also flour, three sheep, oil and spices, and it appears reasonable to attribute this to his higher diplomatic standing.

Related Administrative Texts

These instructions to disburse allocations to the travellers were all found in Group 3, at the north side of the room, and along with them a number of administrative records were recovered (Nos. 47–52 and 56–8). Together with similar texts from the other contexts, these indicate that the issue of provisions to travellers passing through (*etāqu*) Harbu and often overnighing there (*biādu* e.g. No. 43:13 *i+na* ^{uru}*har-be be-du-ni*) was a regular obligation on the administration of the town. Some of the disbursements recorded were to foreigners, sometimes just referred to as *ubru*, without a name but with a gentilic such as “Hittite” (Nos. 54; 56) or “Canaanite” (No. 54). They sometimes travelled with Assyrian escorts (No. 48 rev. 2’–3’; 54: 19–20). Others are Assyrians mentioned by name but not usually by title. Occasionally issues are made to an official for a high-ranking personage, such as Sin-mudammeq(’s horse) in No. 45, or drinks (*ma-al-ti-tu*) for Ili-pada, in No. 53. One person whose profession is stated is Puḫašenni (a Hurrian name) in No. 58, who is identified as a “despatch-rider” (^{lu}*kal-li-ú*) and was given 2 *sūtu* bread for his meal (*a-na nap-te-ni*), no doubt taken at Harbu, and 2 *sūtu* “for the journey” (*a-na hu-li*). Some travelled with a chariot and a chariot driver (No. 50),⁵⁰ and while the men received a bread allocation this could be accompanied by a grain ration (*ŠUKU* = *kurummutu*?) for their animals. Two “Hittite envoys” in No. 56 received a bread ration, but only one received grain for his animals because the other “came on foot” (*i+na še-pi-šu i-li-ka-ni*). Not infrequently the text mentions places on their route, including (W)aššukanni (Nos. 54; 55; 57), Pandibe (No. 50) and most often Saḫlala (Nos. 42; 43; 45; 48; 55). No. 42 is an issue of fodder for two yokes of horses bringing seed corn from Saḫlala; likewise No. 48 records the fodder for two yokes of horses and two donkeys for envoys passing through from Saḫlala with an Assyrian escort.⁵¹

While the majority of these issues were of bread and/or grain, as with the letter orders from Salmanu-muṣabši other commodities were occasionally included. No. 43 provides Aššur-iddin with a considerable amount of bread and six sheep, in each case partly for the journey (*a-na har-ra-ni*), and partly for *kaššu*, an obscure term which presumably refers to some event taking place in Harbu itself.⁵² In No. 50, an Assyrian and his chariot driver receive

⁵⁰ A chariot pulled by a yoke of (probably two) horses seems to have been a normal mode of transport for these dignitaries, sometimes supported by donkeys, presumably pack-asses. A similar text of unknown provenance (Postgate 1988 No. 99) mentions “Dalluqu, a rider (*ša pēthalli*)” who is escorting “foreign (envoys and?) village headmen” (*ub-ru-te EN.MEŠ URU.DIDL*).

⁵¹ As well as horses and the occasional donkeys, we have one text mentioning fodder for mules (*ku-di-ni*), although these may not have been involved in a journey (No. 49: 11, 15).

⁵² Jakob hesitates to identify this Aššur-iddin with the well-known high personage of this name, and unfortunately his title in Nos. 10–11 is either uncertain or illegible. For the term *kaššu* see Jakob 2009, 77–8 on ll. 2/4; Ismail and Postgate 2008, 160–1. It seems certain that it is an activity or event which entails a meal, though it is not clear if it is exclusively cultic.

beer, *ḥaršu* bread and one sheep when overnighing at Pandibe (close to Ḥarbu); that he was given a whole sheep suggests he was quite high ranking, as pointed out by Jakob (2009, 82).

Other External Correspondents

Before examining the exercise of government at Ḥarbu in more detail, we need to establish the size and nature of the administrative cadre, both at the town itself and outside. The Chuera texts provide unusually revealing evidence for the size of the administrative community present, and directives coming to them from central government also provide useful hints. While Salmanu-mušabši is probably the highest-ranking official directly involved in the documentation from Tell Chuera, he is not the only correspondent issuing orders to the local staff from elsewhere. Alongside the very stereotyped group of seven letter orders from Salmanu-mušabši himself at Durkatlimmu (see pp. 281–2), we have a number of more varied and much less formal letters from an official named Sin-mudammeq. He was based at (W)aššukanni, and probably the governor in that city.⁵³ From there he wrote both to Durkatlimmu, where four letters from him to his superior called Aššur-iddin, the Chief Chancellor at the time, were discovered (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996 Nos. 2, 3, 4 and 5; pp. 29–30), and also to Ḥarbu, where most of his correspondence was addressed to Sutiū (who may have been the local governor).⁵⁴ Some of his letters are partly concerned with provisioning state-sponsored travellers and feeding animals (e.g. Nos. 2; 4; 5; 6; 7; 11), but they may also include a variety of other requests, which concern matters as varied as making bricks, emery, locusts, women and brewers. Sin-mudammeq is also one of three external correspondents who sent letters to Ana-šumiya-Adad, probably while he held the post of mayor (*ḥāziānu*), and perhaps during the absence of Sutiū.

Of the other external correspondents the most frequent is called Sin-ašared. He also writes to Ana-šumiya-Adad (No. 18), about providing hospitality for an Assyrian and his charioteer, and his other letters deal with miscellaneous topics including the supply of sesame for regular offerings (No. 29). Unfortunately these letters, and two references to someone with this name, who appears from the administrative texts (Nos. 81 and 83) to have owned property in the vicinity of Ḥarbu, are not enough to pin down his status and role in relation to Ḥarbu.⁵⁵ Similar uncertainties afflict our interpretation of another correspondent, called Aššur-iddin: he bears the name of the Chief Chancellor well known at Durkatlimmu, and his telegraphic letter to Ana-šumiya-Adad (No. 17) could well have come from someone of his rank (so, also Jakob 2009, 56). Similarly, the elaborate preparations required of Sutiū by Sin-mudammeq in

⁵³ His title is not given, but with Jakob (2009, 4) it seems plausible that he was the *bēl pāḥiti* of (W)aššukanni.

⁵⁴ See Jakob 2009, 4.

⁵⁵ For the possibility that he came from the elite of Assyrian society and was one of the officials responsible for a “(writing-) board” of state employees, see Jakob 2009, 16–17, and, on the “(writing-)board” system, Freydank 2001; Jakob 2003, 29–30; p. 27. This function would apply to Sin-ašared, son of Lullayū, as in Nos. 81 and 83, and this is not inherently implausible. However, it should be noted that one of the sons of Sin-mudammeq was also called Sin-ašared (see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 98 on DeZ 2514), and it would not be unusual for a son to exercise his father’s authority. The name is not too rare, as one of the principal agricultural overseers at Durkatlimmu was also called Sin-ašared (Röllig 2008, 22). Without patronymics, it is unfortunately impossible to be sure whether there are two or only one person with this name in the Chuera texts.

No. 12 for a visit by Aššur-iddin seem appropriate for a high official, but this could equally be the Aššur-iddin in No. 43, who also receives provisions including six sheep, and seems less likely to be the Chief Chancellor as he is given the titles “royal eunuch” (*ša SAG LUGAL*) and “[Commander] of ... troops” (*LÚ.[GAL] ÉRIN.MEŠ x-a-te*).⁵⁶

The Local Personnel

As we shall see, the Assyrian community based at Harbu was not overlarge, and, frustratingly for us, those who wrote the documents rarely saw the need to give its members their official titles or professions, so we have to reconstruct the hierarchy from occasional hints and more or less compelling assumptions. Although it is not known as a province from other sources, Harbu’s status as a province with a governor is indicated by letters addressed “To the Governor (*bēl pāhete*) of the town of Harbu” (Nos. 22–4). If this governor makes an appearance in the surviving texts the most obvious candidate is the Sutiū to whom at least 16 letters (Nos. 1–16) are addressed.⁵⁷ These reveal an official who oversaw a wide range of activities, including craft production, commanded a garrison and received instructions for supplying grain rations and catering for travellers on state business (No. 40). If he is indeed the governor, we would expect him to be the agent in charge of the state’s affairs in the province, as a representative of the central government, and not necessarily a local person.

Immediately below the governor in the local government hierarchy was probably Ana-šumiya-Adad, who is once given the title of mayor (*hāziānu*), and may therefore have been a local. As we have seen, not only Sin-mudammeq but also Aššur-iddin and Sin-ašared write letters to him, perhaps while Sutiū was absent. His responsibilities include the gathering and storage of the harvest, and he is also involved in cult activities (No. 17). In No. 18, he is instructed by his correspondent to provide for a visiting dignitary and his party for 2 days, and to allow them to eat and drink with him until they return,⁵⁸ implying that he was viewed as holding an elite office, agreeing with his title of mayor. Other officials mentioned in the texts include Sin-napšer, whom Jakob sees as carrying out functions appropriate to a steward (AGRIG), and a number of farm managers (2009, 12). No scribes are identified as such in the Chuera texts, which is in line with their infrequent mentions in other administrative archives, so we are in the dark as to who may have curated the archive we have and what office they might have held. It is hard to imagine that letters addressed to the governor would be stored anywhere than in his own records office; perhaps in this relatively small settlement the governor and the mayor shared a secretarial staff.

The Government Establishment

While Salmanu-mušabši’s instructions are addressed to the governor, and we hypothesised that this might be Sutiū, in these administrative texts neither the governor nor Sutiū is named

⁵⁶ See Jakob 2009, 53, 56 and 77.

⁵⁷ So Jakob 2009, 11.

⁵⁸ *il-te-ka li-ku-lu il-te-ka li-il-ti-ú* Jakob 2009, 57.

as the issuing authority. No. 42 is the single text from Chuera which explicitly identifies the palace as the owner of the commodities issued, a very usual formulation at other sites. In this case the text specifies that commodities are “in the charge of” (*ša qāt*) ̒ersi, whom Jakob identifies as probably a farm manager (2009, 77), and in No. 55 grain issued is “in the charge of Abi-šamši”, who is explicitly identified as a farm manager (GAL LÚ.ENGAR). On the other hand, in No. 43, the large disbursement required for Aššur-iddin was “in the charge of Ana-šumiya-Adad”, presumably in his role as the mayor (*hāziānu*), and Jakob plausibly assumes that Sin-mušallim, who is the official making issues in Nos. 47, 56 and 57, was acting as Aššumiya-Adad’s successor in that office. In other words, the rather sparse evidence suggest that (1) Sutiū was not himself regularly engaged in the administrative procedures of local government, and (2) that it was principally the mayor and a number of farm managers who controlled the issue of commodities from government stocks.

Land and People

The resources on which the local officials drew to supply their high-ranking visitors derived in part at least from the state’s own enterprises in the province, and these were administered by the same body of officials. In this context texts Nos. 76 and 78 are particularly revealing. With Jakob, they seem to document the registration of landholdings made available to the officials by the state (2009, 107). No. 76 records the allocation of plots of land totalling 60 *iku* among 28 persons; again, professions are not specified, but some of these people can be recognised elsewhere in the archive carrying out official functions. In No. 78 several holdings of similar size (1–3 *iku*) are grouped together and summed up as “in the charge of PN”, strongly suggesting that they were administered collectively under some kind of manager, which would be practical given the small size of each parcel⁵⁹ – unfortunately neither of these presumed managers is given a professional title or is otherwise known.

Although it is not stated explicitly, the obvious assumption, as made by Jakob, is that these are state-owned parcels of prebendary land allocated to state employees for their maintenance while carrying out their duties. As he also points out, with an average of about 2 *iku* per person (and perhaps a maximum of 4 in just one case), these are not self-sustaining landholdings, and indeed there is evidence that another form of remuneration was available. Text No. 67 records the allocation of 25.15 homers of grain, as rations for 1 month, to 28 named persons, who include Ana-šumiya-Adad, Sin-napšer, ̒ersi and others attested elsewhere as administrators; the tablet apparently bears the impression of Sin-mudammeq’s seal. No. 68 is another grain allocation list with many of the same names, perhaps as many as 30, though from a later year; the summation on the top edge is unfortunately damaged, but does seem to have described the list as having been issued as rations to “Assyrian [...] personnel” (ÉRIN. MEŠ [x x x] áš-[šu-r]a-ie-e).⁶⁰ The combination of these two texts is highly suggestive. For one thing, if we give the application of Sin-mudammeq’s seal to No. 67 its full weight, it can

⁵⁹ For the size of the *iku* see p. 56, and for calculations of its yield capacity see e.g. Jakob 2003, 313; 2009, 13.

⁶⁰ The implications of the term “Assyrian” (also used in No. 9) remain doubtful, but that it was perceived as a precise concept is evident from MARV 3.63; see pp. 12–14.

only mean that as a higher official he is authorising the allocations to the individual members of the Harbu administrative cadre as listed – with implications for our understanding of the management of personal liabilities and also the degree of supervision exercised over rural centres. Secondly, it is significant that in these two ration texts the numbers of recipients involved are very similar (28 and about 30), although from different years, and also that 28 plot holders are listed in field text No. 76. This allows us to make a provisional assumption that this was the normal size of the cadre of prebend-holding officials at Harbu, and also, despite the broken text in No. 68, to assume that they were some, and perhaps all, considered “Assyrians”. Succinctly, therefore, the Chuera texts allow us to suggest that under Tukulti-Ninurta the town of Harbu was administered by about 30 state officials exercising a variety of functions including most obviously farm managers, who were recognised as “Assyrians”. The recurrence of the same persons in different documents within the archive tends to support the reconstruction of a relatively small and tight-knit governing body.⁶¹

The Displaced Populations

While these officials were entrusted with the internal administration of their own cadre at Harbu and with provision for miscellaneous travellers on affairs of state, they were also charged by the central state authorities with providing for state dependants of a different kind. One tablet (No. 64) lists women and children prisoners of war described as “booty” (*šallutu*) who had been brought from elsewhere (place name lost) and are assigned singly to the “houses” of individually named Harbu residents. They seem to bear predominantly Akkadian names, but we are not in a position to guess what military events were responsible for their capture and displacement. The absence of men or boys in this list suggests that this was not a very humanitarian process, and that the families have been broken up either by death or forcible separation.

This is in clear contrast to the other evidence for displaced populations which relates to a group of Elamite families. In No. 40, grain rations for 15 days were issued by Sutiū to 10 Elamite troops (ÉRIN.MEŠ *e-la-mi-a-ie-e*) “on the orders of Sin-mudammeq”. Likewise Nos. 70 and 71, 4 months apart in the same year, each record a month’s ration for many of the same Elamites, listed in these texts with all the members of their nuclear families. Some Elamites also appear to be among “threshing-sledge personnel”⁶² receiving bread rations in No. 46, but the two most significant texts are Nos. 69 and 77. The first of these is summed up as follows:

[ŠU].NIGIN 5 ANŠE 7BÁN ŠE
ŠUKU-*su-nu ša* [1 I]TI UD.MEŠ

Total: 5.7 homers of grain
their rations for [1] month,

⁶¹ As for the organization of this cadre, the officials in text No. 67 are separated into five groups by horizontal rulings, and Jakob has proposed that each division correspond to “a decury” (*ešartu*), literally “group of ten”. Text No. 80 has to do with duties towards the Ištar Temple, which were assigned to different decuries at different times, and it is attractive to think that these might be the same groupings as indicated in No. 67, although this is by no means certain. On a broader canvas, the two Aššur texts cited in Jakob 2003, 29²⁰² (MARV 4.127 and MARV 4.173) indicate that “decuries” formed the basis for the allocation of some prebendary land from the state’s holdings in the vicinity of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta (see p. 43).

⁶² ŠUKU 15 ÉRIN.MEŠ *nam-šar-te* (No. 46:7’); for this abbreviated writing compare LÜ.GIŠ.NAM.SAR.MEŠ at Durkatlimmu (Röllig 2008, No. 103:4), and the more syllabic *ša nam-šar-a-te* in MARV 8.81:6.

6 ANŠE 6BÁN ŠE NUMUN- <i>šu-nu</i>	(and) 6.6 homers their seed corn
<i>ša</i> 22 IKU A.ŠĀ- <i>ni</i> ?	for 22 <i>iku</i> of field
<i>ša</i> ĒRIN.MEŠ KUR <i>e-la-mi-a-i</i> [<i>e-e</i>]	of the Elamite personnel.

In the main part of the list the family heads are listed with their dependants, and for each is stated the amount of the ration and the amount of their seed corn. No. 77 is less detailed, giving merely a list of 12 names against an area of 2 to 4 *iku*, and a final entry: “Total 33 *iku*, of field of the Elamites”, but the names are mostly (or entirely?) the same as the lists in Nos. 70 and 71.

In Nos. 69, 70 and 71, which give the full details of each family, the head of each family is designated as an “archer” (BAN), while the other members of the family are given other rather precise designations depending on their sex and age. The wives and older daughters are described as “of working (age)” (*ša šipri*), with slightly younger girls called “apprentices” (*talmidātu*). Some of the sons may also be “archers”; those somewhat younger are called “basket(?) boys” (*ša kukulli*). The next group is called *tāriu* for the boys and *tārītu* for the girls, while the smaller children are either “weaned” (*pirsu*) or “breast feeding” (*ša tūli*). In one instance (No. 71:10) the oldest son is a “slinger” (*uš-pu*). This hybrid classification, with the older males given military designations, is not unique to Chuera, but is present in some of the military administrative documents from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta referring to Šubrian (i.e. Hurrian) deportees.⁶³ Because lists of this type include young children and (in the case of the Aššur texts) widows, it is obvious that the military functions of the older males are used as a means of age classification, and do not imply that they are currently under military command. This is also implied by the Aššur texts which include household possessions and domestic animals under each family. It is striking that both “Elamites” at Ḫarbu and the “Šubrians” at Aššur are classed as “archers” and “slingers”: rather than deducing from this that in the original social context of every deportee from these two different regions the adult males were exclusively archers, and their younger colleagues specialists trained as slingers, it seems more likely that the Assyrian administrators used these terms to create an age classification of their own which they applied regardless of the ethnic origins of the people listed. As to the identity and social status of these Elamites, questions persist. A few of them do bear palpably Elamite names, but many of the names are linguistically Assyrian, sometimes even incorporating the name of the god Aššur, and with Jakob it seems probable that a period of assimilation may already have taken place (2009, 17–18). In the texts we have they are not designated as prisoners of war or deportees, and we are not able to establish whether their presence at Ḫarbu is voluntary or not. Whatever the precise legal position, it seems unlikely that the Assyrian administration would provide rations and seed corn out of sheer charitable good will, and we will hardly

⁶³ See Postgate 2008, 86–7 on MARV 4.123 and 125. MARV 4.123 relates explicitly to “deported Šubrian workforce” ĒRIN.MEŠ *šu-ub-ri-ú na-áš-h[u(-tu)]*. Deported Hurrians, with their families and possessions, are also listed in the very large document MARV 2.6 which was fully analysed by Freydank (1980), although the correct interpretation of BAN as “archer” and (*ša*) *ušpi* as “slinger” eluded him because the sign BAN was misidentified as ŠITIM “builder”. MARV 4.89 is similar and probably also refers to Šubrian families to judge from the Hurrian personal names (cf. Freydank MARV 4, p. 19).

be mistaken in assuming that the state authorities outside Harbu arranged for the resettlement of these families in the Harbu region to boost agricultural production from which the state itself would benefit in some way. Most probably the Hurrian deportees at Aššur were in due course settled as dependent workers or *šiluhlu* to farm state agricultural estates, or allocated to favoured landowners, and this may well be exactly what has happened to the Elamites, whether they were technically deportees (*našhūtu*) or not. This would be no isolated incident: we have already seen instances in the Habur triangle where the provincial governors are charged by the state authorities with feeding deported populations within their provinces (pp. 244–8).

Other Administrative Documents

Most of the administrative documents cited so far show the local officials disbursing rations or allocations to those passing through Harbu, or being settled there, on state business at the behest of external correspondents, or administering the state's provision for material support of their own cadre of Assyrians operating in the service of the state. This can hardly have been the sum total of their duties, and a few of the surviving documents do reflect the more diverse activities within the wider community which the correspondence addressed to Sutiū and Ana-šumiya-Adad implies. Production and storage of grain is probably the chief recurrent concern, and No. 62 gives details of how 120.3 homers of grain from Ana-šumiya-Adad's harvest was stored or otherwise disposed of, while No. 61, with no names preserved, recorded issues of grain for seed corn and ox fodder, the oxen of course providing the traction for the ploughs. Grain or bread was issued to local residents: No. 60 is a note of grain expenditure for various purposes including rations for horses, making bread and as issues to individuals among whom are a potter, a barber and an oil presser. This is an informal note, which gives us no clue as to the basis for these issues, but there are also at least three sealed contractual agreements drawn up by Ana-šumiya-Adad with craftsmen and others. No. 81 records Ana-šumiya-Adad's issue of 10 homers of grain to Šamaš-tišamme (probably listed among the staff in No. 67) for grinding: in the usual formula "he will grind (it) and deliver (it), (and) may (then) break his tablet". This grain he had withdrawn from a village storage facility belonging to Sin-ašared, and No. 83 also has Ana-šumiya-Adad acting on behalf of Sin-ašared:

No. 83

5 ANŠE ŠE.Ī.GIŠ
i-na GIŠ.BÁN SUMUN
 [ša¹]d¹sin-SAG
 DUMU ¹lu-la-ie-e
 ša ŠU ¹áš-šum-ia-d¹IM
 DUMU *i-ra-bi-de-en*-DINGIR
 [x-u]g²-[r]a²
 [x x -r]a²-a-[x]
 [¹d]a-al-ze-e-ni
 [DU]MU iš-ti-ie-e

5 homers of sesame
 (measured) in the old *sūtu*,
 [belonging to] Sin-ašared,
 son of Lullayu,
 in the charge of Ana-šumiya-Adad,
 son of Irabbi-den-ili,
 (2 lines broken)

Dalzeni,
 son of Ištiyu,

ù *da-al-ze-e-ni*
 DUMU *a-i-si-qa*
a-na ^{uru}*ni-nu-a it-ta-šu*
a-šar i-qa-bi-ú-ni-šu-nu-ni
i-du-nu ki-šir-ta
i-ša-bu-tu-ni
tup-pu-šu-nu
i-ḥap-pi-ú

and Dalzeni,
 son of Aisiqa,
 have taken to Nineveh.
 Wherever they tell them
 they shall deliver (it),
 they shall draw up a case-tablet
 (and) they may break
 their tablet.

Jakob 2009, 111–12

Here he is entrusting 5 homers of sesame to two known members of the Ḫarbu cadre (confusingly both called Dalzeni), and their task is to take the sesame to Nineveh and deliver it according to instructions. The administration there will issue them with a ratified receipt (*kiširtu*) and on production of this the debt-note can be broken. This is therefore a delivery contract, while No. 81 was a work contract.⁶⁴ A third sealed tablet is No. 82, which is a work contract between Ana-šumiya-Adad and Ubru. His profession is missing in a break on the tablet, but he is presumably a brewer (LÜ.ŠIM) as he is required to convert 10 homers of grain into malt (MUNU₄) and may then break his tablet. This is by no means Ana-šumiya-Adad's only transaction involving beer: in No. 53 he acknowledges receipt of a quantity of beer from a brewer, after the accounts relating to two separate occasions had been totalled and included in the accounts (*gab-bu up-pu-uš a-na NÍG.KA₉.MEŠ ša-kín*). As we have seen, one of the principal roles of the Offerings House at the national shrine was the conversion of a proportion of the cereals which came in as regular offerings into quantities of beer, and it seems to have been of equal importance to Assyrians in the provinces.⁶⁵ At Ḫarbu No. 66 is a note of 5 Suḫaeen brewers from three different places who have settled (camped?) in the community fields (A.GĀR) of Ḫarbu, and brewers also feature more than once in the letters from external correspondents. They seem to have been in demand and to have moved around a lot. In No. 9 we learn from Sin-mudammeq that the brewers at Waššukanni have not received their sheep, a problem which may resurface in text No. 1.⁶⁶ We know of course that the more important travellers passing through Ḫarbu received beer among other rations, and in No. 39 we learn that a certain Uppuku received from Šamaš-šalim-ereš the brewer two daily issues of beer, plus “one for the road”, totalling 9 *sūtu*. In No. 12, Sin-mudammeq issues instructions to Sutiu to install 5 brewers in advance of the arrival of Aššur-iddin, with reference to a *napṭartu*, some kind of hostel. It is clearly a major event for Ḫarbu, and at the end of this letter

⁶⁴ One possible reason why these two tablets were formally sealed documents is that the commodities (grain and sesame) were apparently the property of Sin-ašared – not, for instance, of the palace. This Sin-ašared is the son of Lullayu, and may therefore be one of the high-ranking “board-holders”, with personal interests in the Ḫarbu region, for whom Ana-šumiya-Adad acts as an agent among his other activities (see Jakob 2009, 16–17). Technically, therefore, these may not be strictly transactions on behalf of the state, but it is no surprise to find such documents in among the public archive, and as Jakob points out they have the *tuppušu iḥappi* clause which is typical of (though not confined to) the internal administrative contracts.

⁶⁵ Cf. also at Sabi Abyad Wiggermann in Duistermaat 2008, 561.

⁶⁶ For the possible connection between the two letters (and for the association of sheep with brewers, perhaps because they could fatten them with their waste products) see Jakob 2009, 41 on No. 1:12f.

he goes into more detail: “I will send you malt ... they will soak and mix (it). Let [Qa]pudu take Sin-mušabši, the Kassite, and Marduk-išmanni, brewers who [mi]x [beer] for silver.”⁶⁷ No. 53 sees Ana-šumiya-Adad receiving 2.4 homers of beer from a brewer with the Babylonian name Aḫu-lumur, and it appears that this was for Ili-pada’s drinking arrangements (*maltitu*), so again provision for a highly placed state figure. The fact that the movement and supply of brewing capacity seems to preoccupy these correspondents would seem to indicate that the production of beer, or at least of the right kind of beer, was something in which the Assyrian administration took a keen interest, and, presumably, that the local population did not generate in sufficient quality and/or quantity. Note that there are different kinds of beer mentioned: *miḥḥutu* (No. 12), the more special being no doubt the SA.MAR *ta-bu* (Nos. 22–8). In Nos. 24–7, this is listed after “Temple Beer” (KAŠ É.DINGIR).

Finally, let us just round off the administration’s concerns with a few scattered items. Text No. 63 lists gold, silver and precious stones “belonging to” (*ša*) two persons, both of whom are listed among the staff in Nos. 67–8 and 76. In No. 79, Ana-šumiya-Adad hands two men from the *bēt nupāri* (workhouse) over to a man called Quraḫi, to allow them to fulfil their *iškāru* obligations (unfortunately not closer defined) to him. We cannot expect to reconstruct the background to this, but it again shows the officials involved in the organisation of labour or craft production. If we go back to the stream of instructions which came in to Sutiū and Ana-šumiya-Adad from external correspondents, we can add to their responsibilities such unsurprising matters as brick making (Nos. 3; 4); a threshing sledge (No. 7); horses and chariots (Nos. 3; 4; 5; 6; 7; 11; 15); personnel such as a carpenter (No. 1), hired labour (No. 4), a confectioner (*kakardinnu*, No. 4) and a Sutean (No. 9), as well as the occasional more unusual item such as emery (*šammu*, No. 5) and locusts (No. 10).

Documentary Format

While the diplomatic letters with their formal sealing constitute our best examples of this class of administrative directive (to be recognised as Akkadian *našpertu*), the remainder of the Chuera archive conforms well to the norms already seen at other cities. In keeping with its source in an administrative office, the archive contained no legal documents with the full panoply of patronymics, sealing and witnesses, and the majority of the remaining tablets are either letters, with appropriate sealed envelopes in some cases, or unsealed lists or memoranda of a purely unilateral nature. Seals were, however, impressed on a few tablets which are not letters, and the seals in question are listed and illustrated in D. Janisch-Jakob’s contribution in Jakob 2009, 187–9. In some cases they are attributable with more or less certainty to individuals known from the documents, such as Sutiū, or Šamaš-tišamme, but unlike legal documents there are no seal captions (Siegelvermerk), and this underlines the relative informality of the documentation and probably also familiarity with the persons sealing and their seals. If we exclude the letters, the sealed Chuera texts fall into two small groups. First there are lists, which are written on tablets already impressed with a seal, described as

⁶⁷ Brewers also find a mention in Nos. 10 and 30.

a “watermark” in Jakob 2009. No. 67, a list of 1 month’s barley rations transferred (*šubalkut*) to Ana-šumiya-Adad, the mayor (*hāziānu*) who is to issue the rations, certainly has the seal of Sin-mudammeq, because this is clearly identifiable on some of the letter envelopes (e.g. Nos. 13–14). As we have seen (e.g. p. 284), he was a highly placed member of the administration, probably based at Waššukanni, and this use of his seal must imply either his prior authorisation, or, less likely, his retrospective ratification of the transaction. The document is perhaps technically an “account” (*nikkassu*), not one drawn up at the time of issue, but either in advance of or after the actual distribution. It should be classed as a unilateral memorandum, and not an informal bilateral document as it would be if the (interim) recipient of the barley, Ana-šumiya-Adad, had sealed the tablet in acknowledgement of receipt. One could have envisaged a transaction in which he did indeed accept liability for the barley, and his fulfilment of that liability would have been acknowledged when the rations had been issued and he had presented his accounts or other documentation to the same effect. As an example of such a procedure we could cite some of the documents from the roughly contemporary Urad-Šerua Archive. Instead, though, this is a situation where a highly placed official sanctions the future use of state resources by his subordinate staff, and signifies this by having his seal impressed on the tablet.⁶⁸ Whether the same applies to the two other examples at Chuera is unfortunately uncertain. No. 68 is likewise a list of barley issues, but the seal cannot be definitely attributed to a known individual, and the only other example of a “watermark” impression is No. 76, a list of fields which apparently has a seal rolled along the left side beneath the cuneiform signs (see copy on Taf. 28), but again we do not know who owned the seal.⁶⁹

The other sealed tablets, Nos. 81–3 (each no doubt a *tuppu šabittu*), form a small but coherent group of three, classed by Jakob as work contracts (*Werkverpflichtungen*)⁷⁰ and described earlier (pp. 289–90). Although their formulation differs in details, each is sealed but unwitnessed, each records the issue of a commodity (barley or sesame) to the debtor(s) and in each case a task is accepted by the debtor(s): to grind the barley (No. 81), to malt it (No. 82) or to deliver the sesame to Nineveh (No. 83). After the fulfilment of their task they “may break their tablet”. This very phrase is testimony to the fact that, informal though they may look, these are indeed bilateral documents, since it is evidently intended that the creditor will retain the tablet until the task had been performed (and indeed, the fact that we now have the tablet presumably indicates that it never was). In Nos. 81 and 83 the grain or sesame is said to be “belonging to (*ša*) Sin-ašared”: he is an official based elsewhere who sends instructions in peremptory terms to Ana-šumiya-Adad in No. 18, and it is Ana-šumiya-Adad, known as the mayor from No. 67, who actually carries out the transaction in both texts, and from whom the tablet would probably have to be reclaimed for “breaking”. In No. 82, by contrast, Ana-šumiya-Adad is himself named as the owner of the grain issued for

⁶⁸ Compare the ration lists from the household of Šilwa-Teššup at Nuzi, a few of which bear his own seal (see p. 365).

⁶⁹ It is suggested, in Jakob 2009, that the seal-owner in No. 68 might be Sutiu, since the seal itself was also rolled on the fragment No. 37, but this can only be a guess, as his name would have to be restored in No. 68 O.R.2’, and note that the seal-owner Sin-mudammeq’s name does not appear at all in the text of No. 67.

⁷⁰ 2009, 22.

malting. It is difficult to judge whether here the commodities are really the personal property of the two officials in question, or are in fact state property: without witnesses, patronymics or seal captions they look very much like documents internal to the administration, and the amounts involved (1,000 litres of grain and 50 litres of sesame) sound very much like government transactions.⁷¹

Conclusions

Harbu does not feature as a province in the documentation from after the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta, and it seems likely that it functioned as an administrative centre for only a limited period. The texts bear witness to a concerted attempt to foster agricultural production, with farm managers or chief farmers among the best-attested officials. Yet there is little sign of interaction with a local population. As Jakob comments, “families ... which were already settled in the town and hence were not active on behalf of the Assyrians, find no mention in the administrative texts”.⁷² In light of this evidence for a programme of state-led agricultural development with an imported population, one has to wonder whether the Assyrian presence was an attempt to resettle a virtually deserted landscape, or it is merely that the nature of the administrative control does not generate the same kind of documentation. To use Harrak’s words, Chuera may well have been one of “a series of administrative centres, purely Assyrian, implanted in the occupied land like islands in a sea of native Hurrians” (1987, 203). Harrak also remarks that “the Hurrian role in the active life of Hanigalbat is absolutely nil” (1987, 195), by which he means that Hurrians do not appear as leading participants in the business or administrative documentation, because they do of course feature in the lists of deportees. The Chuera texts, as we have seen (p. 287), suggest that the administrative cadre in the town was only in the region of 30, while as Jakob comments, other Assyrians working on the land or as craftsmen came or were transplanted from the Assyrian homeland in the wake of the official cadre of administrators.⁷³

It is always dangerous to argue from an absence of evidence, but the impression given by the Chuera archive, that this was a government organisation designed primarily to act as a way station on the important east-west route, and secondarily to establish state-supported cereal production, may not be far from the truth. Yet it would be rash to imagine that because we do not have, for instance, any private business archives or records of state-controlled animal husbandry centred on Harbu, they did not exist. As we shall see, there is no doubt that from the reign of Shalmaneser the central government was interested in promoting wool and meat production through its provincial centres, and it seems unlikely that the plains

⁷¹ This would be my preference, shared by Jakob “Gegen einen Privatrechtlichen Kontext der Urkunde spricht allerdings das Fehlen von Zeugen. Es scheint daher besser, lediglich ein verkürztes Formular statt sonst üblichen *ša qāt* “aus der Verfügung” anzunehmen” (2009, 111).

⁷² “Familien ... die bereits vor der assyrischen Eroberung in der Stadt ansässig waren und danach nicht für die Assyrier tätig wurden, mithin in den administrativen Texten keine Erwähnung finden” (Jakob 2009, 17).

⁷³ “Es dürfte sich hierbei um Landarbeiter und Handwerker handeln, die im Gefolge des Beamtenapparates aus dem assyrischen Kernland gekommen bzw. versetzt wurden” (Jakob 2009, 17).

around Tell Chuera were less favourable to shepherds than around Durkatlimmu, much further south on the lower Ḥabur.

5.4. Tell Ali, Ancient Atmannu

From the government buildings (“palace”) of a town on the Lower Zab, formerly within the kingdom of Arrapha, comes a small archive illustrating the activities of flock-masters (nāqīdu), who managed hundreds of sheep and goats. It becomes clear that this was a state-run venture intended to generate a regular supply of wool for the slave women in the palace’s weaving establishment. They made work clothes for the use of government dependants (šiluhlu), no doubt mostly labouring in the fields, as well as higher-quality textiles for use within the palace. Even though discovered by accident, and so lacking a clear archaeological context, the tablets have the appearance of a single coherent archive, representing the internal records of the flock-masters’ office, and without any bilateral documents.

Few of the published Middle Assyrian documents from Aššur itself are concerned with sheep and goat herds either, but that animal husbandry was not beneath the dignity of Assyrian rural administrators and was placed on record by Assyrian scribes is hinted at by a few of the texts from Šibaniba (see pp. 275–6), and placed beyond doubt by the archive from Durkatlimmu on the Ḥabur (pp. 303–13), but also by a chance find from east of the Tigris made some 30 years ago. The steep mound called Tell Ali stands on the left bank of the Lower Zab overlooking the river at the point where a traveller going east from Aššur towards Arrapha (the ancient name of Kerkuk) would cross it (see Figure 2.1), and in 1978 the Iraqi antiquities service took charge of a little archive of 25 tablets which had accidentally surfaced at the site. They were identified as Middle Assyrian and expertly copied by Dr Bahijah Khalil Ismail, and when I visited Baghdad in 2002 she asked me to help prepare a full edition of the texts because in Iraq at that time she had neither the necessary library resources nor a possibility of publishing.⁷⁴ The archive reveals that the Assyrian name of Tell Ali was Atmannu. This has been convincingly identified with the town of Natmanu which features quite frequently in the Nuzi archives, but it is not mentioned in other Middle Assyrian texts, and it was certainly not a provincial capital, so that we are here looking at records from a minor rural centre. Although small, the archive offered a surprisingly comprehensive insight into the activities of the local flock-masters documenting not only the composition of their flocks but also the ultimate destination of the animals and their by-products.

Flock Composition

Some tablets recorded the composition of the flock or flocks under the control of individual flock-masters (*nāqīdu*), and this information can be presented in tabular form.

⁷⁴ Preliminary notice: Ismail 1982. Edition: Ismail and Postgate 2008.

Table 5.2. *Flock composition (after Ismail & Postgate 2008, 152)*

Text	Day, month	<i>gurrātu</i>	<i>parrātu</i>	<i>iabili</i>	<i>hurāpu</i>	<i>enzu</i>	<i>unīqu</i>	<i>urīšu</i>	<i>a-Za-du</i>	Total
1	26.vii	162	35	63	26	0	0	15	0	(301)
2	26.xi	249	64	184	52	16	4	5	3	577
3	12.viii	248	45	182	50	0	0	4	0	429
4	15.ix	322	90	167	70	23	8	17	8	805
5	25.vii	206	33	115	18	0	0	4	0	376
6a	lost	138	30	90	31	4	0	0	0	231 ¹
6b	lost	99	23	55	[11]	30	2	16	1	257
		adult	young	adult	young	adult	young	adult	young	
		female	female	male	male	female	female	male	male	
		sheep	sheep	sheep	sheep	goat	goat	goat	goat	

These records come from different years, and were doubtless prepared annually on a regular basis, but because of the Assyrian calendar, we cannot be sure at what time of year the head count was taken. The tablets name the flock-master in charge of each flock, but they are unsealed and unwitnessed and can be seen as internal, unilateral documents without dispositive force. They give a familiar picture of mixed flocks with a preponderance of female sheep, rather fewer males and a few goats, and although two of the tablets also record by-products – sheep and goat skins, wool and goat hair and butter – the flock composition was surely designed primarily for wool production and a limited supply of meat from the adult males.

These priorities are neatly reflected in the remaining texts from the archive. Nos. 7–11 give details of animals taken from the flocks for various purposes, including cultic sacrifice and meals for the king's entourage, and as to be expected, the animals to be slaughtered are adult males or lambs.

No. 8, 5–23

5	4 UDU.NITÁ.MEŠ <i>ki-i</i> LUGAL	4 male sheep, when the king
6	<i>iš-tu</i> ^{uru} <i>su</i> ² - <i>gi</i>	returned from Sugi
7	<i>a-na</i> ^{uru} <i>šu</i> - <i>hi-saḥ</i> <i>i-tu-ra-ni</i>	to Šuḥisaḥ,
8	¹ <i>e-be-nu-si</i>	Ebenusi (the mayor)
9	<i>a-na ka-ši-ma e-ta-pa-áš</i>	<u>slaughtered for the <i>kaššu</i> event</u>
10	7 UDU.NITÁ.MEŠ	7 male sheep, slaughtered
11	<i>i-na</i> UD.20.KÁM <i>a-na ni-qi'-a-te</i>	on the 20th day for the sacrifices
12	<i>i+na</i> ^{uru} <i>šu</i> - <i>hi-saḥ</i> <i>ep-šu</i>	<u>in Šuḥisaḥ.</u>
13	2 SILA ₄ .MEŠ <i>a-na ka-ši</i> ²	2 lambs for the <i>kaššu</i> event
14	1 SILA ₄ <i>bal-ṭa</i>	1 lamb, live,
15	<i>a-na</i> É LÚ.MU.MEŠ	<u>they took for the cook-house.</u>
16	<i>il-te-qe-ú</i>	
17	1 UDU.NITÁ ¹ SUM— ^d <i>a-šur</i>	1 male sheep Iddin-Aššur
18	<i>a-na</i> ^{1,d} UTU- <i>el</i> ² - <i>la i-ti-din</i>	<u>gave to Šamaš-ella.</u>
19	1 SILA ₄ ¹ <i>ut-hu-še-ni</i> LÚ.ŠU.I	1 lamb Utḫu-šenni the barber

- 20 *i+na* ^{uru}*túr-ša-an* took in Turšan.
 21 *il-te-qe*
 22 UDU.MEŠ *an-nu-tu ša i+na* These (are) the sheep which were
 23 *a-lak* LUGAL *i-na* ^{uru}*šu-ḫi-saḫ ep-šu-ni* slaughtered in Šuḫisaḫ on the king's march.

Although based at Atmannu, our flock-masters were required to provide animals for occasions involving the king elsewhere – not only at the town called Šuḫisaḫ (Nos. 7–8), but the provincial capital of Kilizu to the north (No. 11), Turšan further upstream to the east (Nos. 8–9) and Reš-nebiri (No. 10) – and in at least three different years, so that we may see this as a recognised function of the Atmannu flocks and not an exceptional situation. Equally Nos. 11–24 make it clear that the Atmannu sheep were expected to supply the local administration at Atmannu with quantities of wool for a range of purposes. As in No. 13 quoted here, it is often specified that the wool is destined for the work-assignments (*iškāru*) of female textile workers in the employment of the palace, but it might also be used for the palace furnishings or for other types of clothing.

No. 13

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| 1 GÚ.UN 25 MA.NA SÍG.MEŠ | 1 talent 25 minas of wool |
| <i>ša ŠU</i> ¹ <i>e-ku-za</i> | in the charge of Ekuza, |
| LÚ.[N]A.GADA | the flock-master, |
| ¹ <i>i-din</i> – ^d AMAR.UTU | Iddin-Marduk, |
| DUMU <i>ú-bal-li-su</i> – ^d AMAR.UTU | son of Uballissu-Marduk, |
| <i>ma-ḫi-ir</i> | has received. |
| <i>a-na</i> GÍŠ.GÀR.MEŠ | For the work-assignments |
| <i>ša</i> GEMÉ.MEŠ | of the slave-women |
| É.GAL- <i>lim</i> | of the palace |
| <i>ta-ad-na</i> | <u>(the wool) is issued.</u> |
| (uninscribed space) | |
| ITI ^d NIN.É.GAL- <i>lim</i> | Month of Belat-Ekalli, |
| UD.10.KÁM <i>li-mu</i> | 10th day, eponymate of |
| ¹ <i>mu-šal-lim</i> – ^d <i>a-šur</i> | Mušallim-Aššur, |
| DUMU ^d <i>a-šur</i> – <i>mu-šab-ši</i> | son of Aššur-mušabši (=year 6). |
- (seal impression on top edge)

Some texts specify that the issue is to meet the annual allocation to the work-assignment, and other supplementary information of various kinds may be supplied, including details of the type or quality of the wool. In some instances the finished product for which the wool is intended is stated: these include “Cypriot” (*alaziyu*) and “Suḫaeen” textiles, but most often a garment called *mašḫuru* which functioned as work clothing for the palace's dependent workers (*šiluḫlu*).⁷⁵ In other cases we again see intervention from the central government, as in No. 24 where on the orders of the high official Ušur-namkur-šarri the palace's wool is issued to a representative (*qēpu*) “for the clothing of the Nairian personnel whom the king gave to Ušur-namkur-šarri”.⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ismail and Postgate 2008, 153. John Bennet alerts me to the idea that a wool type abbreviated as *ku* in Linear B (e.g. at Thebes) may have been “Cy(priot)” (see Rougemont 2009, 149⁷⁰).

⁷⁶ For this gentleman, see p. 29.

Documentary Format

Although there are examples from other times and places in Mesopotamia, including Nuzi close by, of formal bilateral contracts between flock owners and their shepherds, the flock lists here (Nos. 1–6) can clearly not be described in this way. They are unsealed and unwitnessed, and beyond the simple statement that the animals listed are “in the charge of” the flock-master, they express no liability. These may therefore be seen as internal memoranda and it indicates that we should see the flock-masters as integrated into the state apparatus. Unlike most other archives, at Tell Ali there are no debt-notes, formal or informal: there are no work contracts with craftsmen or delivery contracts with persons inside or outside the administration. The tablets which record the disposition of animals (Nos. 7–11) are formulated as administrative memoranda, not bilateral contracts, and even No. 9, which is almost certainly an envelope and certainly sealed, merely records the consumption of the animals and identifies the official who received them (*maḥir*), without explicitly establishing a liability. This is in accord with the procedures observed in other Assyrian archives, where envelopes are reserved for receipts, and incidentally, in the household of Šilwa-Teššup at Nuzi.⁷⁷ The same procedure is applied with the texts recording the disposition of wool, most of which are formulated as receipts: at least four had envelopes sealed and introduced with the formulaic *tup-pí* (DUB.BI, Nos. 20, 21, 22 and 24⁷⁸), and several of the tablets without envelopes bear seal impressions (Nos. 12, 14, 15, 16, 18). Whether or not they all originally had envelopes, we may recognise these as informal bilateral documents from within an administrative organisation, because they are none of them witnessed, patronymics are generally not given and there is no caption identifying the seals. If the opportunity arises to study the seal impressions on the Tell Ali texts, they might tell us whether the person sealing was also the person receiving the wool (or sheep) or a third party ratifying the document. In either case, though, it seems clear that the sealed document would have been created to provide the flock-master in question with confirmation of his proper disposal of the goods, which may have been particularly important with transactions in different places or at the behest of the central authorities. In short, this small archive was generated within the state organisation, and deals exclusively with the internal administration and movement of commodities and how the flock-masters were fulfilling their responsibilities.

Summary

The Atmannu archive shows very clearly how the local economy was adapted to the requirements of the state. The flock-master is a state official, and the state flocks under his control are designed to supply wool for the palace workshops and meat for state occasions. From the birth of the lamb to the work clothes of men working in the fields the whole enterprise is in the service of the state, and so we read in No. 23 “Total 3 talents 22 minas of wool, belonging

⁷⁷ See p. 350.

⁷⁸ Unfortunately it is not known if the inner tablet No. 24T was sealed, but the practice elsewhere was to seal both the inner tablet and the envelope of receipts.

to the palace, in the charge of Takbaru the flock-master". Despite the range of transactions recorded, one or more of the flock-masters are directly involved in all of them, and the texts do not cover any business which cannot be related to their flocks, so that this small group would seem to have been kept apart from whatever other government records were kept in the state offices at Tell Ali. Nevertheless, they supply "the palace" or provide the annual "work-assignments of the slave-women of the palace" (No. 13; cf. No. 20), and the flock-masters must have been closely integrated with the rest of the local government structure.

Who constituted that local government structure and comprised the administrative hierarchy remains uncertain, because as usual the scribes only occasionally mention people's professions. Atmannu was a small town, not a provincial capital, and although a "governor" (*bēl pāḥiti*) is once mentioned, he was presumably governor of one of the known provinces, perhaps Turšan.⁷⁹ The mayor (*ḥāziānu*) of Atmannu has a role to play but is presumably not an administrator appointed from outside by the state, but a local dignitary selected to represent his community. The state's administration was centred on the palace: this is not a purely abstract concept, since there does seem to have been an actual palace at Atmannu to which slave women were attached, so conceivably the highest-ranking resident official would have been a palace overseer or possibly a steward (AGRIG).⁸⁰ If this person is mentioned in the texts he was probably Iddin-Marduk, son of Uballissu-Marduk, who takes delivery both of five sheep for a royal visit (No. 9) and of quantities of wool for the palace workshops (No. 13 and others). The overseer of the weavers (No. 12) and the man in charge of the *šiluḥlu* workers (No. 15) were presumably also colleagues within the administration.

Although very few of the published texts from Aššur are concerned with animal husbandry, this is no doubt due to the chances of discovery. Even at Atmannu it is clear that the central government relied on state-owned flocks to supply meat and to clothe labourers working for the state, and now the publication of the stock-breeding texts from Durkatlimmu, to be described next, reveals not only comparable arrangements, with the wool often going to clothe the state's agricultural personnel, but also a deliberate attempt to monitor the year on year productivity of the state flocks.

5.5. Tell Sheikh Hamad, Ancient Durkatlimmu

The Middle Assyrian archive from Tell Sheikh Hamad on the lower Ḥabur has yielded fascinating correspondence between the local high officials and the centre, including the king in person,⁸¹ but for our current agenda the 106 tablets published in Röllig 2008 and relating to state-run agriculture and animal husbandry are at least as important. Like the Tell Ali texts, these are almost all documents generated by the local administration for its own internal purposes, and

⁷⁹ Rather than Arzuḥina as suggested in Ismail and Postgate 2008, 151.

⁸⁰ Note that at Tell Sabi Abyad it is the steward Tammitte who is in charge of the flock-masters and determines the date on which they should attend the annual count (Wiggermann 2000, 200).

⁸¹ Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996 No. 9 (Tukulti-Ninurta).

the majority of them are secondary compilations of data. If some or all of those data originated from bilateral documents involving individual herdsmen or farmers, those tablets were not retained in the same archive room (unless there are some which have not yet been published).

As far as stock breeding is concerned, the secondary nature of the records is instantly apparent because a single tablet may include data on more than one species, and often on all three of the separate operations for cattle, donkeys and sheep with goats; the numbers of animals in the different herds and flocks are listed by age and sex, and each is assigned to a different herdsman or flock-master. Most if not all of these statements were first drawn up, or at least the data were recorded, in spring, around the time of the annual shearing (or rather plucking). From them a more elaborate record would also be compiled, in one case (No. 34) included on the same tablet as a simple flock list, regulating the liabilities of the individual herdsmen. As at other times and places in Mesopotamia, these accounts enumerate the losses and officially sanctioned disposals of animals, list skins brought in by the shepherds and then redefine the shepherds' outstanding liability by calculating the expected birth rate for the coming year.⁸² When the annual statements from successive years can be compared, it does seem that for some time at least the size of the state's herds and flocks did grow year by year, and the provincial government will therefore have profited not only from this capital growth but also from increased wool production. Among the texts edited in Rölliġ 2008 there are not the equivalent texts to those from Tell Ali which detail the allocation of a flock-master's annual wool intake, but examples are known from Durkatlimmu and are edited in Rölliġ 2002. These show close similarities to the organisation of the Atmannu palace, with a flock-master's wool allocated directly to female weavers (of whom there seem to have been about 18 employed at one time) for the production of work clothing and other textiles.

From Durkatlimmu we also have comparable internal administrative documentation concerned with the state's cereal farms over a number of years. There were four of these, each under a separate chief farmer, and their areas, given in round numbers (e.g. 200 or 300 iku), suggest that they were newly established as a deliberate initiative to boost cereal production. Whether this was as successful as the animal husbandry venture seems doubtful. Each "harvest allocation record" gave the total crop recovered from each farm and then detailed how it was distributed (or to be distributed) under four different headings: seed corn for the following year, fodder for the plough oxen, rations for the farm labourers (šiluhlu) and any remainder to go into the palace's storerooms. In some years, there was no remainder to store, and the texts mention both political and climatic disasters which were responsible for failed harvests. Just as with the stock-breeding texts, data from different responsible officials are here combined into a single statement, and the closing distributions and remaining stored balances do not allocate separate amounts to each chief farmer individually. They are therefore compiled for the internal purposes of the provincial administration and are not bilateral instruments concerned with regulating the liabilities of individual officials. The same applies to other documents, some of which relate to spices and sesame production, and to a group of eight tablets which list the volumes of old and freshly deposited barley stored in different state facilities either in Durkatlimmu or (in

⁸² See Postgate 2012, which partly covers the same ground as pp. 306–13.

four cases) at the town of Duara. No. 83 is similar, but is concerned with the sesame storage at Durkatlimmu, which, like some of the barley stocks, stretches back over three years. These texts appear to constitute an attempt by the administration to establish how much grain it had, or should have had, in store; it is impossible to know whether the administration's information is taken from visual inspection of the different storage locations or has been extrapolated from its own records. Either way, with one exception (No. 89, see p. 318), they are unsealed memoranda and give us a further insight into a provincial government's attempts to monitor its economic enterprises.

Introduction

The Assyrian town of Durkatlimmu, the modern site of Tell Sheikh Hamad on the west bank of the lower course of the Ḥabur (see map, Figure 2.1), owes its name to the Amorite dynasty associated with the city of Mari, one of whose first kings, Yaggit-Lim, fortified the site and named it Dur-Yaggit-Lim. Excavations at the site have been running for a quarter of a century under the direction of Hartmut Kühne,⁸³ and one of the principal harvests of this project has been the archives from the Middle Assyrian administration which established itself on the summit of the mound (see Figure 5.3). The chance discovery of 30 Middle Assyrian cuneiform tablets in 1977, turned up by modern irrigation works on the western side of the citadel mound, was followed in 1978 by the initiation of excavations at the site of Tell Sheikh Hamad (spelled by the excavators Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad), and this led to the uncovering of “Gebäude P” (see Figure 5.4), in particular of Room A, from which the Middle Assyrian archives were recovered, and transferred each season until 1984 to storage in the museum at Der-ez-Zor.⁸⁴

The 668 numbered pieces⁸⁵ were found lying in black and grey ash on a layer almost certainly deriving from the ceiling and overlying floor surface between the ground floor and an upper room (Room A'). Beneath this were large quantities of carbonised barley,⁸⁶ in a row of chambers which also housed handicrafts and activities involving liquids, and formed the lower storey of a building on the upper floor of which the archives had been stored.⁸⁷ Judging from its location in a dominating site on the citadel mound and from its contents, this must surely have been part of the palace, although it is perhaps unclear whether this was the residence of the Chief Chancellor (*sukkallu rabiū*, specifically Aššur-iddin and Salmanumušabši), of the provincial governor (*bēl pāḫiti*), or of both. The texts from here span nearly

⁸³ See H. Kühne 2008, and for a comprehensive bibliography, Röllig 2008, XI–XXXII.

⁸⁴ Röllig 2008, 1; H. Kühne 2008, 545–6; Pfälzner 1995, 106–14 (with plan reproduced in Jakob 2003, 324); Pedersén 1998, 94–6.

⁸⁵ 668 is the final revised number of registered texts and fragments (H. Kühne, pers. comm. 2013, and BATSH 12, forthcoming).

⁸⁶ Cultivated two-row barley (*Hordeum distichum*) with a heavy admixture of the wild species (*H. spontaneum*) and a range of arable weed seeds indicating that crop was cut low on the stalk and possibly stored as sheaves. The poor quality of even the cultivated grains betrays unfavourable growing conditions (see van Zeist 1999/2000, 122).

⁸⁷ For the provenance and the evidence that the tablets had fallen into the grainstore from above, see Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 7; my description also takes account of information from the excavator (H. Kühne pers. comm.).

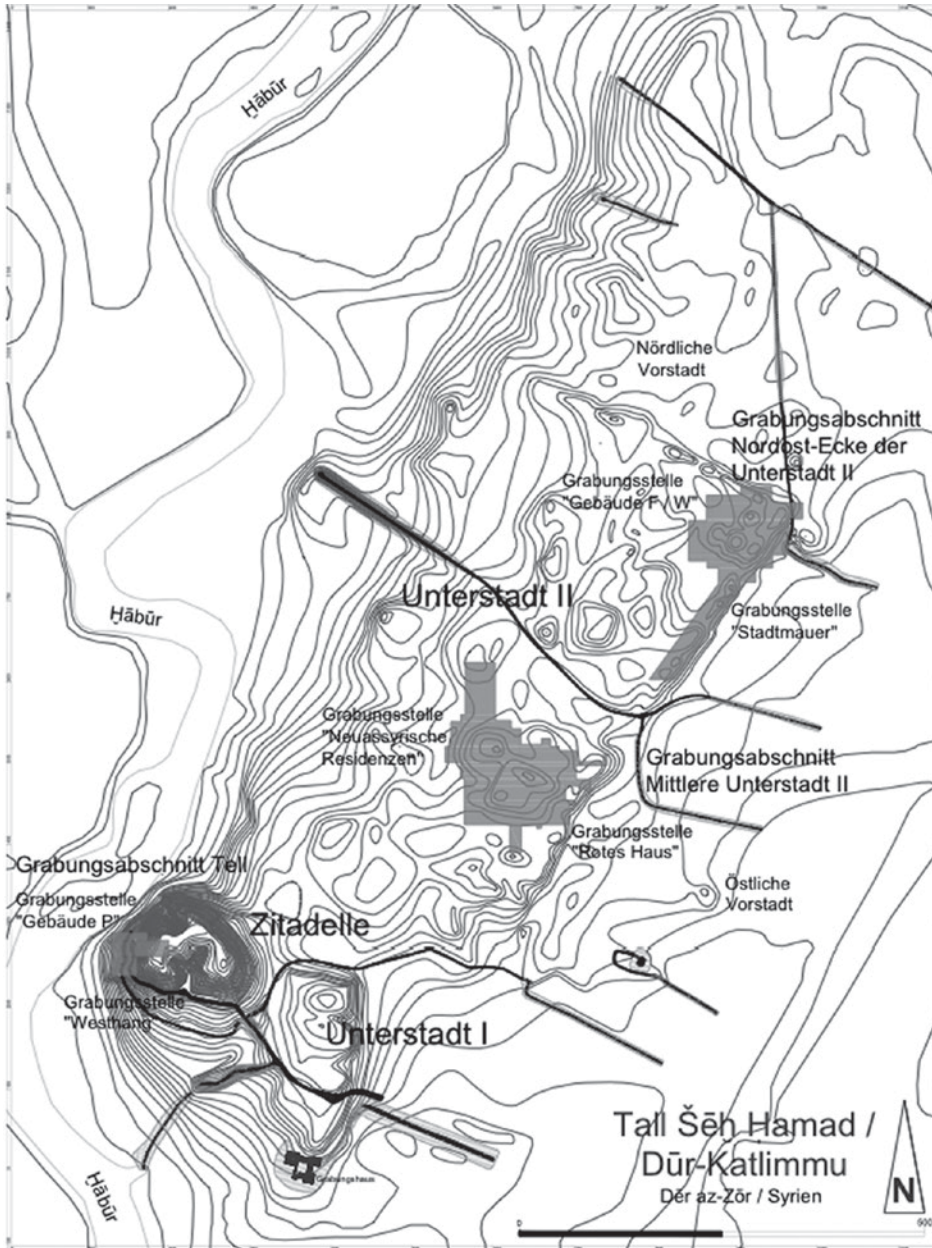


Figure 5.3. The site of Tell Sheikh Hamad. Gebäude P is in the Citadel on the high point at the SW corner of the mound. © H. Kühne.

half a century, stretching back as much as 23 years into Shalmaneser's 30-year reign, and perhaps another 20 years into the reign of his son and successor, Tukulti-Ninurta. From this extensive archive both the 30 or so letters, edited in Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, and the 106 agricultural documents edited in Röllig 2008 are extremely illuminating. In what

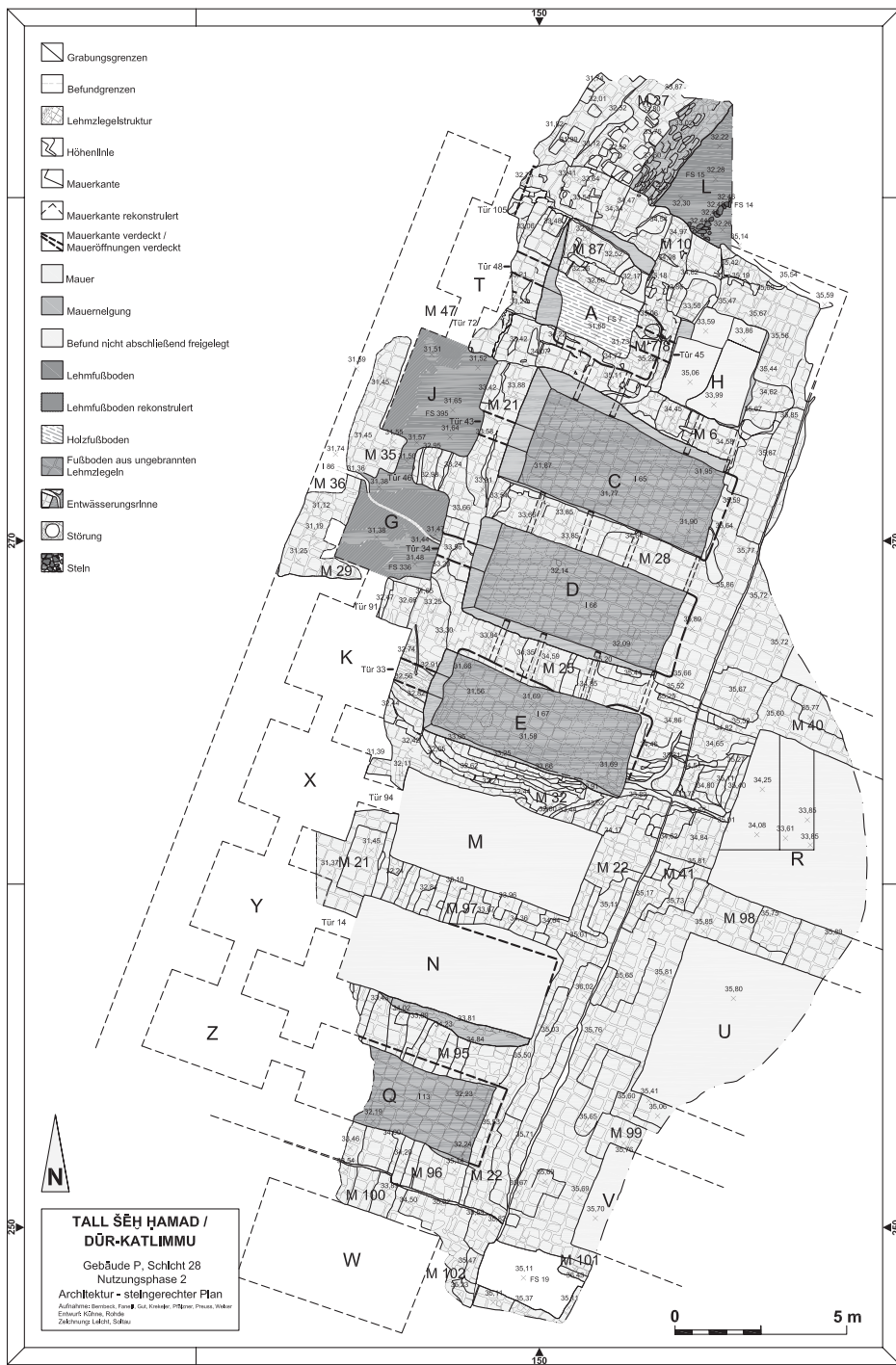


Figure 5.4. The granary in Gebäude P, phase 2. The tablets were found in Room A. © H. Kühne.

follows much of what is written necessarily replicates Röllig's introductory pages, for the well standardised documents provide solid evidence for the palace's administration of its stock-breeding and agriculture enterprises. It should be borne in mind that among the as yet unpublished Durkatlimmu texts there may well be some which will illuminate related aspects of the state's economic activities, but this need not prevent us from observing at least this agricultural sector.

Animal Husbandry: The Flock Lists

Texts 1 to 59 in Röllig's definitive edition are concerned with domestic animals and provide detailed documentation of the state's involvement in the herding of sheep and goats, cattle and donkeys. As at Tell Ali, the flocks of sheep and goats will have been kept for their wool and goat hair and also as a source of milk products and eventually meat and skins. The principal reason for the palace to maintain herds of cows will have been to provide traction for the ploughing of its fields, but also in due course leather, while we presume that the donkeys served for transport. Horses do not feature in these texts, although we know they were used in military and diplomatic contexts.⁸⁸

The documents called by Röllig *Listen über Herden* form the largest group: text No. 7 is typical. The formulation and content are simple: the texts are arranged by species, with cattle (GU₄.MEŠ) listed in the first section, followed by the section on donkeys (ANŠE.MEŠ), and finally the sheep and goats, referred to collectively as *ṣēnā* "flocks", and this order is almost invariably observed. Within each species the lists classify the animals by age and sex, and the total for each section is then stated, with the cattle and donkeys often described as *sugullu* "herd", and the name of the herdsman responsible is given. Since at least eight of the texts include all three sections, it is evident that the texts are secondary compilations prepared by an organisation which oversaw the full range of the state's stock-breeding enterprise, but there are also several tablets which list only one or two of the three species groups – for example just donkeys, or cattle and donkeys or just sheep and goats.

Annual List of Herds and Flocks (Röllig 2008 No. 7)

18 GU ₄ .ĀB GAL	18 adult cows
4 GU ₄ .ĀB MU.3	4 three-year-old cows
3 GU ₄ .ĀB MU.2	3 two-year-old cows
6 <i>mu-ra-tu ša GABA</i>	6 sucking female calves
1 GU ₄ .NÍTA <i>si-lu-nu</i>	1 old ox
1 GU ₄ .NÍTA MU.4	1 four-year-old ox
2 GU ₄ .NÍTA MU.3	2 three-year-old oxen
5 GU ₄ .NÍTA MU.2	5 two-year-old oxen
5 <i>mu-ru ša GABA</i>	5 sucking male calves

⁸⁸ As attested in the Tell Chuera texts. Horses are mentioned only twice in Röllig 2008, each time as recipients of grain rations. No. 69:26 mentions the consumption of 12 homers of grain for 4 months at 5 *qû* (per day) by two horses "of state service" (*ša ilki*). No. 92 records issues of grain to four men "for the rations of the horses and beasts (*ú-ma-mi*)" on the occasion of a journey back from a place called Dur-Adad.

ŠU.NÍGIN 45 GU ₄ .MEŠ <i>su-ku-lu</i>	Total: 45 cattle, herd
ša ŠU ^{1d} IM-MU-KAM	in the charge of Adad-šuma-ereš.
21 EME ₅ .MEŠ GAL	21 adult donkey mares
5 EME ₅ MU.3	5 three-year-old donkey mares
5 EME ₅ MU.2	5 two-year-old donkey mares
1 <i>su-ḫi-ir-tu</i> ša GABA	1 sucking female foal
1 ANŠE.NÍTA <i>ḫu-ul-qú</i>	1 lost male donkey
5 ANŠE.NÍTA MU.3	5 three-year-old male donkeys
7 ANŠE.NÍTA MU.2	7 two-year-old male donkeys
5 <i>su-ḫi-ru</i> ša GABA	5 sucking male donkeys
ŠU.NÍGIN 50 ANŠE.MEŠ <i>su-ku-lu</i>	Total: 50 donkeys, herd
ša ŠU ¹ [šil]-li- ^d IM	in the charge of Šilli-Adad.
271 U ₈ .MEŠ	271 ewes
78 <i>pa-ra-tu</i>	78 female lambs
179 UDU.NÍTA.MEŠ	179 male sheep
50 UDU.NIM.MEŠ	50 male lambs
1 <i>šu-ši</i> 9 ŪZ.MEŠ	69 female goats
30 MUNUS.ÁŠ.GÀR.MEŠ	30 female kids
37 MÁŠ.MEŠ	37 male goats
9 <i>a-za-du</i>	9 male kids
ŠU.NÍGIN 723 <i>še-na</i>	Total: 723, flock(s)
ša ŠU ^{1d} IM-le-i	in the charge of Adad-le'i.
ITI <i>ḫi-bur</i> UD.20.KÁM <i>li-mu</i>	Month of Ḫibur, 20th day, eponymate
¹ ú-sa-at- ^d AMAR.UTU	of Usat-Marduk.

Although in these lists the animals are only once (No. 2) explicitly identified as “belonging to the palace”, with Röllig we can safely assume that they are all palace property, and at the end of each section we are given the name of the palace employee responsible for the herd or flock. Often only their name is used, but their function is sometimes specified: the cattle are looked after by the “ox-herd” (LÚ.SIPA GU₄.MEŠ), the donkeys by the “donkey-herd” (LÚ.SIPA ANŠE.MEŠ),⁸⁹ while the person in charge of the flocks of sheep and goats is not a “shepherd” (SIPA = *ra'iu*) but a “flock-master” (NA.GADA = *nāqidu*). As already noted, not all the documents include all three classes of animals, but when they are recorded together the scribes consistently placed the cattle first, followed by the donkeys and ending with the flocks.

In many of the texts it is stated that the list is the result of a “review” or “stock-take” (*māšartu*).⁹⁰ This evidently took place annually, as follows from the frequency with which the texts are dated to the final month of the calendar, Ḫibur, in particular to the 20th day.⁹¹ To judge from other Mesopotamian sources, paralleled by ethnographic observations, flocks of sheep and goats in particular would have been checked at the time of plucking, in spring,

⁸⁹ In No. 53:54 Tukulti-Adad is explicitly called the “donkey herd of the palace”.

⁹⁰ The scribes also use the cognate verb *ašāru* “to check” in this context, cf. No. 51:18–19 664 *še-na ša qāt PN ša li-me* Adad-uma'i *áš-ra-a-ni* “which were checked in the charge of PN for the eponymate of Adad-uma'i”.

⁹¹ For the 20th Ḫibur as the end of the accounting year see Röllig 2008, 4 in respect of grain and animal texts, and Röllig 2002, 591 for wool accounts.

earlier in the year than the completion of the grain harvest, yet the great majority of the harvest accounts from Durkatlimmu are also normally dated to the same day (20th Ḫibur). Quite a few of the domestic animal lists are dated in the 9th, 10th or 11th months, which could fall in spring time if Ḫibur was the month when the cereals harvest was completed, but what little we know of the calendar does not allow us to make this assumption. As observed by Röllig, these texts do not mention intercalary months, and how the Assyrians managed their calendar before they adopted the Babylonian months in the reign of Tiglath-pileser I is not known.⁹² In any case, the frequency of the 20th Ḫibur tends to indicate that the texts were written in accordance with an accountant's, not a farmer's calendar, and we must allow for the possibility that, even when dated then, the tablets were using herd lists originally compiled earlier in the year.

These texts are dated to at least 27 different years, over a period which in all must have lasted about 40 years, but ends before the Durkatlimmu archives as a whole,⁹³ and in the course of this time different ox-herds, donkey-herds and flock-masters were appointed. We hear of only one ox-herd at a time. Röllig indicates that the best attested ox-herd, Ḫaburraru, who held the post for at least 12 years, was followed by Iddin-kube, after whom came Adad-šuma-ereš followed by his son Mušallim-Adad, who was in the post for at least 7 years (2008, 5–6, 8). Only two donkey-herds are attested for any length of time: Adad-da'an, who held the post for at least 16 years, and Šilli-Adad, who was probably his son, for at least 19 years. Text No. 3 indicates that in the eponymate of Aššur-bel-ilani the herd of 108 donkeys was shared between Šilli-Adad and a second donkey-herd, Tukulti-Adad (who is explicitly called the "donkey herd of the palace" in No. 53:54), and we learn from No. 53 that this arrangement lasted for at least three years. There is a greater variety of flock-masters, and in at least three years the palace is using two flock-masters simultaneously (Nos. 19; 30), something also seen at Atmannu (see p. 295).⁹⁴ This may have to do with the size of the flocks: in No. 30, the two flock-masters, Sin-apla-iddina and Erib-Sin, are responsible for 620 and 602 animals respectively, and it would be easy to suggest that the combined number of about 1,200 would be more than a single flock-master could or should manage. The same could be said of No. 19, where the same two flock-masters have the total of 1,430 divided almost equally between them (722:708). In No. 23, dated some 4 years earlier, Adad-le'i alone has 1,162 animals under him, and this is an increase from 900 in No. 26 and 723 in No. 7, 1 and 3 years earlier respectively. About 15 years earlier still Adad-le'i has no more than 299 animals, and this is in line with his predecessor, Sin-abi, whose holdings in the successive eponymates of the

⁹² See p. 52. When calculating annual rations the scribes allowed thirty days per month (see p. 316), which, if strictly observed, would give a calendar which gradually became out of line with the lunar months, but we have no indication of how or whether adjustments may have been made before the adoption of the Babylonian system (cf. Röllig 2008, 4 also inconclusive on this issue).

⁹³ See Röllig 2008, 6 "die späteren Jahre Tukulti-Ninurtas ab dem Eponymat des Etel-pi-Aššur ... nicht mehr vertreten sind". For the twenty-seven known eponym years attested and the additional years which are not actually represented, see Tabelle 1c on p. 9.

⁹⁴ Note the mention of 10 "flock-masters" at Sabi Abyad (Wiggermann 2000, 200).

two Aššur-mušabšis were recorded as 213 (No. 14) and 234 (No. 15).⁹⁵ Fewer flock lists have come down to us than cattle and donkey lists, and it may be dangerous to assume that those we have accurately reflect the palace's entire holdings in a year, but in line with these figures Röllig has noted that numbers not only for the flocks but also for cattle and donkeys seem to rise generally later in the sequence, in the new reign of Tukulti-Ninurta (2008, 10).

Animal Husbandry: The Yield Statements

By comparison with other herding regimes known to us in Mesopotamia, it would be reasonable to assume that the annual stock-take gave the owner of the animals the opportunity to hold the herdsmen to account for their performance over the previous year and to determine the level of their obligation for the year to come.⁹⁶ In both the state and private sector it was common practice for the owners to require an annual amount of wool and a number of newly born animals from the shepherd, in line with accepted ratios of wool to wool-bearing animals and lambs to adult females. From the state records of Old Babylonian Larsa we learn that “the shepherds were allowed a 15 per cent natural loss on the adult ewes, to be offset against an expected 80 per cent birth rate ...”, and “two minas, or about 1 kg, of wool was expected from each animal”.⁹⁷ If it had been a good year, and the flock had exceeded the 80 per cent expectation, the shepherd stood to profit in person; but he was also liable for any shortfall, whether in the amount of wool or in the number of surviving adult animals or newborn lambs. At Nuzi, much closer in time and place to Durkatlimmu, Morrison writes that “practices governing the contractual relationship between the herdsmen and the livestock owners at Nuzi were similar to those of the Old Babylonian period. Herdsmen were expected to return the livestock to the owner at the *buqūnu* [plucking]. Livestock that died or were lost while in the herdsmen's care were to be repaid.... Further, the practice of producing the skins of dead animals to prove losses seems to have been followed.”⁹⁸

It is reasonable to expect similar arrangements to have operated at Durkatlimmu, but since most of the annual herd and flock lists do no more than list the live animals in the keeping of each herdsman at one moment in the year, giving the numbers of different ages and sexes, they have nothing to say about changes from year to year or the mutual relationship between the state and the herdsman. This information was gathered in a different and less transparent type of accounting text, no doubt often on the same day, as some of these texts also are dated to the 20th Ḫibur. These tablets are termed by Röllig “Rapporte über die Erträge der Herden” – reports on the yield of the herds – and could be called “yield statements”. They

⁹⁵ For the chronological order of these documents see Röllig 2008, 9 Tabelle Ic. Note that there are other mentions of Sinabi's flocks, but the eponymate in No. 34 is uncertain (though we may guess that his holdings there were [2]58 rather than just 58), and the 328 animals mentioned (though not totalled) in No. 21 are not in a comparable document.

⁹⁶ For a succinct description of earlier herding relationships cf. Postgate 1992, 159–61, and note that at Old Babylonian Larsa, as here, the sheep and the cattle were recorded by the same office (*ibid.*, 164).

⁹⁷ Postgate 1992, 161.

⁹⁸ Morrison 1981, 270–1.

present information about diminutions of the herd, whether through deaths attested by the delivery of skins, or from issues on the instructions of the state or some other reason, and on the growth of the herd expressed through the birth rate (*tālittu*), and thus they make a statement about both the past performance and the future obligation of the individual herdsman or shepherd.⁹⁹ As Röllig notes, most of the entries are introduced by the word *ištu* ... “After ...”, and it is easiest to begin by illustrating this with an example.

Annual Calculation of Liability (Röllig 2008 No. 39)

<i>iš-tu</i> 1 GU ₄ -šu <i>a-na</i> ŠE.IA.[GI]Š	After 1 ox of his had been issued to
<i>a-na</i> <i>a-ra-še</i> <i>a-na</i> ¹ <i>be-ru-ti-ia</i>	Berutiya for cultivating sesame;
<i>ta-ad-nu-ni</i>	
11 GU ₄ -šu NÍTA <i>a-na</i> GAL.MEŠ LÚ.ENGAR.MEŠ	11 male oxen of his had been issued to
<i>ta-ad-nu-ú-ni</i>	the chief farmers,
11 GU ₄ .ÁB.MEŠ <i>ki-mu-ú-šu</i>	(and) he had received 11 cows instead;
<i>im-ḥu-ru-ni</i>	
1 KUŠ GU ₄ .ÁB GAL- <i>te</i>	1 hide of an adult cow had been issued
<i>a-na</i> LÚ.ASGAB	to the leatherworker
<i>a-na</i> GIŠ.GÀR GIŠ.GIGIR	for the work-assignment of a chariot;
<i>ta-ad-nu-ni</i>	
1 GU ₄ -šu	1 ox of his was issued to be driven
<i>a-na</i> ^{ur} <i>tu-tu-ul</i>	to Tuttul;
<i>a-na</i> <i>ra-da-e ta-din</i>	
NÍG.KA ₉ .MEŠ-šu <i>šal-mu</i>	his accounts were finalised.
1 šu-ši.TA.ÀM <i>ta-li-tu-šu</i>	His birth-rate is at 60,
<i>a-na</i> 80.TA.ÀM <i>ta-li-te</i>	for a birth-rate at 80
2 GU ₄ <i>mu-ru ma-tí-ú</i>	2 calves are lacking.
ša-bat NÍG.KA ₉ .MEŠ <i>ša</i> ¹ 10-MU-KAM	Accounts audit of Adad-šuma-ereš
LÚ.SIPA GU ₄ .MEŠ	the ox-herd.
ITI <i>a-pu</i> -LUGAL.MEŠ	Month of Apu-šarrani,
UD.20.KÁM <i>li-mu</i>	20th day, eponymate of
^{1.d} <i>na-bi-um</i> -EN-PAB	Nabu-bela-ušur.

Apu-šarrani is the month before Ḫibur, and this is no doubt part of the annual accounting process in which the relationship between the ox-herd and the state is regulated. We have to assume that in drawing up this document the two parties had before them agreed numbers for the current composition of the herd, and also a knowledge of the comparable figures for the previous year, although neither set of figures is repeated here. As in other Mesopotamian cases where the liabilities of shepherds towards the private or institutional owners of the flocks or herds are adjusted, the text does however list animals extracted from the herd on the instructions of the state and for which the herdsman was therefore no longer held responsible (in Old Babylonian, *zi.ga=šītum*).¹⁰⁰ It also lists an ox hide which had been passed to a

⁹⁹ No. 34 unusually combines both statements on a single tablet, giving first the herd and flock numbers for cattle, donkeys and sheep+goats, and then in the same order their annual yield statements introduced by *ištu*.

¹⁰⁰ Compare similar entries in the Tell Ali texts (e.g. Ismail & Postgate 2008 Nos. 7; 8; 11).

leatherworker who was working on a chariot, presumably for the state. There were also deaths and losses to be accounted for: in No. 22 we read that 75 donkeys had been handed over to Tukulti-Adad on the instructions of the governor for pasturing (*a-na ra-’a-e*), and that “he will fully replace the lost and the dead” (*ḥalqa u mēta umalla*). However, it was accepted that some deaths would occur naturally, and in this case the herdsman could escape at least some liability by bringing the skins of the dead animals, which were of course intrinsically of value but also constituted evidence that an animal had not been sold or otherwise disposed of. Hence most annual liability statements are formulated differently and may include a number of hides (or sheepskins) which are to be deducted (*karrû*) from the total for which the herdsman is liable. No. 40 is an example of this.

Annual Birth-Rate Statement with Submission of Skins (Röllig 2008, No. 40: 9–19)

<i>iš-tu</i> 3 KUŠ ANŠE.EME ₅ GAL	After 3 skins of adult female donkeys,
1 KUŠ EME ₅ MU ₂	1 skin of a 2-year-old female donkey,
1 KUŠ EME ₅ <i>pír-si</i>	1 skin of a weaned female donkey,
1 KUŠ ANŠE MU ₄	1 skin of a 4-year-old male donkey,
2 KUŠ ANŠE.MEŠ <i>pír-si</i>	2 skins of weaned male donkeys,
ŠU.NÍGIN 8 KUŠ-šu	– Total 8 skins of his
<i>i+na</i> UGU-šu	have been deducted from his liability,
<i>kar-ru-ú</i>	
NÍG.KA ₉ -šu <i>šal-mu</i>	his accounts are finalised.
40.TA.ĀM <i>ta-li-tu-šu</i>	His birth(-rate) is at 40.
^{1.d} IM–DI.KUD SIPA ANŠE	Adad-da’an, donkey herd.

This text seems straightforward: it sounds as though he has produced these 8 skins and he has accordingly been exonerated from liability for these animals. However, other texts indicate that the usual procedure was more elaborate. No. 56 lists a similar variety of sheep and goat skins, and then states:

ŠU.NÍGIN 35 KUŠ.MEŠ <i>ša še-ni sa-mu-ḥa-te</i>	Total: 35 skins of mixed flocks.
<i>i-na</i> 1 ME 10 KUŠ.MEŠ <i>na-aš-šu</i>	In 100 10 skins have been brought.
22 UDU.NÍTA.MEŠ <i>a-na É.GAL-lim ta-ad-nu</i>	22 wethers have been issued to the palace.
<i>i-na</i> UGU-šu <i>kar-ru-ú</i>	They have been deducted from his liability.

Röllig 2008, No. 56: 5–8

That the shepherd should have supplied 22 male sheep to the palace, and is not to be held liable for them, is entirely in accordance with our expectations – it was regularly the males which were dispensable in the composition of the flocks. The difficulty is with the second line quoted here. Like the annual liability statements, it does not give us the actual figures for the animals, merely a basis for numerical calculation; to be understood, it has to be treated alongside a number of similar entries, for example:

ŠU.NÍGIN 46 KUŠ.MEŠ <i>i-na</i> 1 ME 7 KUŠ.MEŠ	Total: 46 skins. In 100 7 skins have been
<i>na-šu a-na É.GAL-lim</i>	brought. He shall bring (them) to the palace.
<i>ú-bal še-ni i-na</i> UGU-šu <i>ú-kar-ru-ú</i>	They will deduct the animals from his liability.

Röllig 2008, No. 51:10–12

The other examples are similar:

No. 21:9–10 *iš-tu a-na 1 ME-te 7 KUŠ.MEŠ i-na UGU-šu kar-ru-ú-ni*

No. 28:13 *i-na 1 ME-te 7 KUŠ.MEŠ i-na UGU-šu kar-ru-ú*

No. 35:4–7 [*ŠU.NÍGIN n KUŠ.MEŠ i-na ME-te [n KUŠ.MEŠ [n]a-šu*

No. 52:6–7 *ŠU.NÍGIN 10 KUŠ.MEŠ i-na 1 ME-te 7 KUŠ.MEŠ na-šu*

No. 53:4 *ŠU.NÍGIN 5 KUŠ.MEŠ i-na 1 ME-te na-šu*

No. 53:10 [*ŠU.NÍGIN*] 6' *K[UŠ].MEŠ i-na 1 ME-te*

No. 53:18 *ŠU.NÍGIN 7 KUŠ.MEŠ i-na 1 ME-te na-šu*

In his edition, Rölliġ considers, but rejects, the possibility that the word we have here is *mēte* “100”, and opts instead for *mētu* “dead”, and proposes (following a suggestion from Freydanġ) that the phrase means that by delivering 7 (or another number of) skins, the shepherd earned the value of one dead animal. However, in favour of 100 rather than “dead” is the fact that in not one but two instances (Nos. 51 and 56) the scribe has written simply 1 ME: ME is obviously an acceptable logographic writing for *mēte*, but to make these two passages say “dead” does indeed require emendation of the text as proposed by Rölliġ (1 *me<-te>*), which is something always to be avoided if possible, and all the more where it occurs more than once.¹⁰¹ Moreover, to express the meaning “in place of” we would expect Middle Assyrian texts to use *kīmū* “instead of” rather than *ina* or *ana*, which do not convey the idea of substitution. More generally, on his interpretation one must wonder why the shepherd should only ever be providing enough skins to substitute for one single animal. Rather it is clear that we are looking at an early case of accountants using percentages: we should understand No. 51 (year 32¹⁰²) as meaning that the shepherd brought 46 skins in total, and that these constitute 7 skins per each 100 animals in his flock, which therefore must have numbered approximately 657. This figure is in line with Erib-Sin’s holdings as listed in Nos. 27 (646; year 28) and 30 (602; undated). No. 56 (undated) suggests a total of 350 animals in Erib-Sin’s flock¹⁰³ – it may be earlier, therefore. Likewise in No. 52 (year 34) the 10 skins supplied by Šilli-Adad would correspond at 7 in 100 to a total of about 140, and this is quite possible since in No. 23 (year 27) his herd numbers 131, and in No. 22 (year 36) we see that he had been holding as many as 150 donkeys (here divided between him and Tukulti-Adad). In the other texts the absolute number of skins brought (and then transported to the palace) is not specified, and we are not told the total number of the annual count. Here the texts are setting out the proportion of skins to live animals used for calculating the herdsman’s annual liability and we have to assume that the calculations were made orally or recorded on a different tablet. The figure 7 recurs in at least five of the nine cases, and this rather suggests that 7 per cent was an accepted norm for permissible deaths over the year, but that the shepherds would not be credited with this if they did not supply the evidence of death in the form of the skin.

¹⁰¹ Note also the writing *i-na me-te* in No. 35: more easily to be taken as “per 100” than “per <1> dead”.

¹⁰² The year numbering used here and later follows the table of eponyms reconstructed in Rölliġ 2008, 4 and reproduced in Appendix 2.

¹⁰³ A figure acknowledged by Rölliġ (note to No. 56:6) to be “durchaus im Rahmen des üblichen”.

It is not apparent what would have happened normally when more than 7 per cent had died, but there were circumstances in which the shepherds could be exonerated for excessive losses. One such situation is reflected for the flock of Adad-le'i:

ŠU.NÍGIN 276 *še-ni a-na* SAG.DU
um-ta-tí ma-a i+na KIN *me-il-te me-e-ta*
i-ta-ma za-ku šúm-ma la-a it-ta-ma
i+na UGU-šu *e-ri-a ul-la-da*
i-ra-bi-a i-ba-qa-an-na

Total: 276 flocks he underprovided for the capital
 saying “They are dead from the action of the *meltu*”.
 He will swear an oath, and be cleared; if he has not
 sworn, they will conceive, give birth,
 be plucked and grow at his liability.¹⁰⁴

Röllig 2008, No. 48:22–7

Similar oath taking is found for the donkey herds in No. 48 and in Nos. 37 and 43, and these add the information that the herdsman had not skinned the cadavers (and consequently had been unable to present the skins as evidence of the loss).¹⁰⁵ It is frustrating that the word *me/iltu* is unknown. Rölliġ translates, with hesitation, “Flut” (2008, 70), but the use of *šipar* (KIN) makes an association with a human affliction sometimes called in medical texts *šipir mišitti*, to which he refers, very tempting, and we may note that in §266 of Hammurapi’s laws shepherds were not liable for losses from “the touch of the god” (*lipit ilim*), provided they swore an oath to substantiate this.¹⁰⁶ Whatever the nature of the *me/iltu*, it probably prevented the herdsmen from preserving the skins as evidence.

Animal Husbandry: The Birth Rates

After listing the skins and other diminutions from which the herdsman could be exonerated, a calculation was made of the annual yield, referred to as *tālittu* “birth(-rate)”. There was, we must presume, a notional target which the herdsman was expected to meet. The basis for calculating this is nowhere made explicit, but it must have been well known to both parties: in the case of state flocks in Old Babylonian Larsa the flock-master was liable to produce 80 new lambs for each 100 adult females, and whatever precise rate might be agreed in other places or times, it would seem most reasonable to tie the herdsman’s liability for the growth of the herd to the number of adult females, rather than to the overall number of animals, for instance. Unfortunately the Middle Assyrian formulation is much more laconic than the Larsa chancery’s, and modern editors have not always agreed on the meaning of the bald statement in No. 40: 40.TA.ÀM *ta-li-tu-šu*. With Jakob, I can only imagine that it means “his birth(-rate) is at 40”, and, despite all qualms, the easiest interpretation of this would seem to be that it is in effect another percentage, “40 (per 100)”.¹⁰⁷ If we accept for the time being that

¹⁰⁴ Note the similar clauses in a contract from Aššur, KAJ 88 (cited by Rölliġ 2008, 86).

¹⁰⁵ No. 19:19–20: *ma-a i+na mi-il-te mi-tu la a-ku-š[u]* “they died from the *m.*, I did not skin (them)”; the same verb, in rather strange forms, in Nos. 43:3’ and 48:10, 23.

¹⁰⁶ One might surmise that the Assyrian form was **mišdu*, a *pirs* formation in place of the Babylonian *mišittu*. For the Old Babylonian texts cf. Postgate and Payne 1975, 6.

¹⁰⁷ I cannot unfortunately follow Freydank 2010 in his verdict that these must be “Stückzahlen”, and despite his doubts, cannot avoid the conclusion that the Assyrians were effectively using percentages, for much the same reasons that we find this convenient today when dealing with proportions of larger numbers.

this is correct, we can then attempt to apply this to the two different rates mentioned in texts like No. 39. There we read “his birth(-rate) is at 60, for a birth(-rate) at 80 (per 100), 2 calves are lacking”.¹⁰⁸ This would seem to mean that if he had had two more calves, he would have achieved a birth rate of 80 (per cent). If we reformulate this, it implies that the addition of 2 calves would bring his birth rate up from 60 per cent to 80 per cent, in other words his actual herd must have had 10 adult females with 6 new calves (making a 60 per cent increase), but 8 new calves would have given a rate of 80 per cent, which was perhaps the agreed ideal target. A total of 10 cows is on the low side, because in fact Adad-šuma-ereš had 18 adult females in the following year (No. 7; year 20) and 24 three years later (No. 8; year 23), but it is certainly not an inconceivable result.

Other Details of the Stock Breeding

Although the annual lists and the calculations of liability are the most frequent types, and fairly standardised, there are minor variations, and additional information is sometimes vouchsafed. We have already seen that the skins of dead animals were brought in to the palace (*ana ēkallim ubbal*) as evidence of death but also as a commodity in their own right. We would expect the herdsmen to be responsible for organising the annual plucking and for providing the resulting wool and goat hair, and deliveries of these are occasionally mentioned. In No. 51, we read that “3 talents and 36 minas of wool was issued to the slave-girls of the palace for work-assignment(s) and¹ clothing”,¹⁰⁹ while a further 8 talents and 9 minas remained “in his charge” (*i+na qa-ti-šu*). Unfortunately we have no indication of how much wool was expected from each animal, but if it were the 2 minas prevalent at Larsa, 11 talents 45 minas of wool would come from about 350 animals, so this could have been the annual amount from Erib-Sin’s flock. Adad-le’i, as we have seen, had a larger flock, and in No. 48 4 talents 49 minas went to the palace slave girls, while 14 talents probably remained in his charge: this total of 18 talents 49 minas at a rate of 2 minas per animal would point to about 590 wool-bearing animals, which again is not impossible. In both these cases the note of wool is followed by smaller quantities of goat hair (44(+)) minas in No. 48, and 2 talents 25 minas in No. 51).¹¹⁰ In No. 51, the flock-master Erib-Sin also retained “in his charge” 0.55 homers (55 litres) of butter (IÀ.NUN(.NA)=*himātu*), and evidently account was taken of the supply of this product, since No. 44 Rs. 9’ logs a shortfall (*mu-ṭa-ú*) of “3 male goats, 56 1/2 minas of wool and 0.16 homers of butter” owed by the flock-master Sin-abi. No. 56 mentions that 0.31 homers of butter “proportionately to his lambs” had not been received from Erib-Sin.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁸ Freydank 2010, 93 understands this passage the opposite way round, with 60 rather than 80 as the “Soll” or target, but it would be unusual for *maṭi’u* to mean “sind abgezogen” rather than “are lacking”.

¹⁰⁹ The amount of 90 talents given in Röllig 2008, 15a and 90 is unexpectedly high, and in fact the copy on page 91 would allow us rather to read here *[i]š-[t]u 3 GÜ.UN 39 MA.NA* (cf. No. 48:31) which gives a more plausible amount. KIMIN sometimes seems to stand for “and”, unless it is merely a graphic variant of *ū*.

¹¹⁰ Wool and goat-hair are also listed in Nos. 21; 30; 44; and 56. The details are all summarized in Röllig 2008, 15a (Tierprodukte).

¹¹¹ Reading *a-na si-ir SILA₄¹.MEŠ-šu* (see Freydank 2010, 98, though he reads the doubtful sign rather as UDU¹).

Animal Husbandry – Conclusions

The reasonable assumption is that in general these texts are records of the entire herds of cattle, donkeys, sheep and goats maintained by the state at Durkatlimmu. This seems justified in the reappearance of the same personnel year by year, and the repetition of similar lists, with an upward trend, even if fluctuations are present. Occasional phrases tend to support this: thus in No. 22: 29–33 we read “Total: 150 native donkeys, herd of the palace of the Upper Province, in the charge of Aššur-iddin the chancellor. Stock-taking (*māšartu*) of the eponymate of Aššur-da’an”. On the other hand, the rather haphazard way the produce of wool, hair and other animal products features in these texts emphasises that we have only a partial view of the whole system. The herdsmen and flock-masters were evidently closely associated with the palace over years and even decades, but the texts make it clear that they were personally liable for shortfalls in their holdings, and we may suspect that they would also have stood to profit from production in excess of agreed norms. Even if the closeness of their relationship to the palace meant that there was no need to draw up formal documentation of their annual liabilities, it seems unlikely that more organised records were not kept of their wool and goat hair production: Whether these were kept elsewhere, regularly destroyed or have not survived the chances of archaeological preservation who knows?

It is evident that the tablets we do have are bureaucratic compilations from information which must previously have been recorded separately: the stock take of the three different classes of animal inevitably involved different palace employees and can hardly have taken place at a single time and place. Although they record the performance of the different herdsmen, these are not bilateral texts. They are neither sealed nor witnessed, and must therefore have been unilateral records for the internal use of the administration, summarising the annual position. There has to be a strong possibility that the information was originally recorded on primary documents which, although still internal to the administration, *were* bilateral and would have provided evidence of the liabilities and performance of each individual herdsman.

Who, though, was in charge of preparing the documentation we do have? The texts do not explicitly tell us who or what branch of the administration was responsible for organising this whole recording process. No doubt it all ultimately fell under the oversight of the provincial governor or even the Chief Chancellor. A probably oral instruction of the provincial governor Eṭir-Marduk is indeed mentioned on one occasion, when the donkey herd is divided between two herdsmen (No. 22) “in accordance with the word of (*ina abat*) Eṭir-Marduk”. The document was drawn up by “Massuku the [representative (*qēpu*)]” and “Ištu-Adad-gabbu, the scribe”, and this same pair often acted together, and were evidently the next most senior administrative officials in the palace after the governor, with responsibility for a range of different affairs. They were the addressees of a sealed letter from Salmanu-muṣabši of which only the envelope survives (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 35; Röllig 2008, 2), and in No. 101 they jointly withdrew spices from the palace storeroom to issue to the governor. Earlier, Massuku also functioned as representative alongside another scribe, Bel-ahhešu (Nos. 9; 66; 81; from eponym years 26 and 27), and in No. 87, where he is described as a royal eunuch (*ša SAG*

LUGAL) acting with another representative (Iddin-Aššur). However, it is clear that Massuku himself was active at Durkatlimmu for many years, and indeed his father, Ber-šumu-lešer, is also encountered as a representative responsible for issuing a garment (Röllig 2002, No. 4), so that the probability is that he was a permanent Durkatlimmu resident. His name, paired with “Ištu-Adad-gabbu, the scribe” is probably correctly restored at the end of the donkey list No. 35, and they are inserted immediately before the date at the end of at least four grain accounts (Nos. 73; 74; 89; 92). It thus seems likely that at Durkatlimmu the state hierarchy below the governor himself consisted as far as animal husbandry is concerned of the representative assisted by his regular scribe, and the flock-masters or others who organised the care of the animals. We may guess that Ištu-Adad-gabbu was personally responsible for the preparation of the documentation we have (even if he did not physically hold the stylus himself).

Fields and Cereals: The Harvest Allocation Records

Massuku the representative and his scribal assistant also monitored the state’s agricultural enterprises, both at Durkatlimmu itself and at the neighbouring settlements where the state maintained farms. In the district of Durkatlimmu itself there seem to have been three regular farms of a similar size, each entrusted to Assyrian officials frequently described as “chief farmers” (*rab(i) ekkārāte*¹¹²), and presumably normally held this post even where it is not specified. In the first section of the account summary for each year the scribe lists the amount of grain recorded as coming from each farm, the area of the farm in *iku* and the resulting yield per *iku*. There is then usually a fourth entry, which is for a smaller field area characterised as *šar’u*, which also falls under a chief farmer and delivers a much higher yield per *iku*. This first section of the account then gives the total area cultivated, the total grain recorded and the average yield for these totals. The second section, introduced by “From out of this grain” (*ina libbi še’i annie*), gives the breakdown of how the grain was used, which regularly falls into three or four categories listed in the same order: (1) seed corn for the following year; (2) fodder for the plough oxen; (3) rations for the dependent workers (*šiluhlu*); (4) the remainder.

That is the basic structure of most of the texts published as Nos. 60–82, but no two texts are precisely parallel, and the minor variations reveal a wealth of extra detail. No. 66 may serve as a fairly concise but typical example.

Harvest Allocation for the Eponymate of Mušallim-Adad (Röllig 2008 No. 66)

[84] ANŠE 2BÁN ŠE *te-li-it* BURU₁₄ *ša* 120 IKU
 [7BÁN].TA.ÀM *it-tal-ka* 2BÁN ŠE-*šu ú-tar*
 [*š*]a ŠU 'TLA-su-KAM GAL GIŠ.[APIN].MEŠ
 [6]5 ANŠE ŠE KIMIN *ša* 120 IKU

84.2 homers grain, harvest yield of 120 *iku*,
 at a rate of 7 *sūtu*, 2 *sūtu* of his grain extra,
in the charge of Balassu-ereš, chief farmer.
 65 homers grain, ditto of 120 *iku*,

¹¹² This profession is written in various ways, including (LÚ.)GAL (LÚ.)ENGAR.MEŠ (see Jakob 2003, 328–9; though not listed here are the occasional writings with GIŠ.APIN[=ENGAR], e.g. GAL LÚ.GIŠ.APIN.MEŠ, MARV 2.23:3, 7 etc.; MARV 3.4:3, 6) or [GA]L GIŠ.APIN MARV 4.112:12; KAJ 114; Billa 23).

5BÁN 4 qa.TA.ÀM *it-tal-ka*

ša ŠU ¹*it-tab-ši-le-šèr* GAL APIN.MEŠ

62 ANŠE 8BÁN ŠE KIMIN *ša* 120 IKU

5BÁN 3 qa.TA.ÀM *it-tal-ka*

ša ŠU ^{1,d}*MAR.TU-MU-le-šèr* GAL APIN.MEŠ

60 ANŠE ŠE *ša šar-è-e ša* 50 IKU

1 ANŠE 2BÁN.TA.ÀM *it-tal-ka*

ša ŠU ^{1,d}*šim-SAG* GAL APIN.MEŠ

ŠU.NÍGIN 272 ANŠE ŠE *te-li-it* BURU₁₄

ša 410 IKU

6BÁN 7 qa.TA.ÀM *it-tal-ka*

i+na ŠA ŠE an-ni-e 123 ANŠE ŠE.NUMUN

70 ANŠE 3BÁN ŠE ŠUKU 22 GU₄.MEŠ *ek-kar-te*

a-di ša ŠE.IÀ.GIŠ 1½ qa.TA.ÀM

ša 6 ITI UD.MEŠ 100 ANŠE ŠE *i+na GIŠ.BÁN ħi-bur-ni*

a-di ħu-ša-ni-šu a-na ŠUKU ši-luḫ-li

ga-mu-ur ta-di-in te-li-it

BURU₁₄ *ša li-me* ¹*mu-šal-lim-^dIM*

DUMU ^dSILIM.MA-UR.SAG ¹*ma-su-ku qe-pu*

[*u*] ¹EN-ŠEŠ.MEŠ-*šu* DUB.SAR *ip-ta-áš-ru-ú*

[ITI *ħi*]-*bur* UD.20.KÁM *li-mu* ¹*mu-šal-lim-^dIM*

at a rate of 5.4 *sūtu*,

in the charge of Ittabši-lešer, chief farmer.

62.8 homers grain ditto of 120 *iku*,

at a rate of 5.3 *sūtu*, in the charge

of Amurru-šumu-lešer, chief farmer.

60 homers grain of furrows (yield) of 50 *iku*

at a rate of 1.2 homers,

in the charge of Sin-ašared, chief farmer.

Total: 272 homers grain, harvest yield

of 410 *iku*,

at a rate of 6.7 *sūtu*.

From out of this grain: 123 homers seed corn,

70.3 homers grain, rations of 22 plough oxen

together with (the oxen) for sesame, at 1½ *qū*

for 6 months. 100 homers grain by the *ħiburnu*

sūtu together with its . . . , for the rations of the

dependent workers, was fully issued. Harvest

yield of the eponymate of Mušallim-Adad,

son of Salmanu-qarrad. Massuku, representative,

[and] Bel-aḫḫešu, scribe, have withdrawn it.

20th *Ḫibur*, eponymate of Mušallim-Adad.

The officials responsible for this account are Massuku, the representative (*qēpu*), and Bel-aḫḫešu, whom we have already met in charge of the stock-breeding accounts. As with the animal husbandry, accountants' summaries of the operations on the government estates were prepared annually, and are often dated to the 20th *Ḫibur*. This tablet is one of those dated to that day, in the eponymate of Mušallim-Adad, early in the reign of Tukulti-Ninurta, and it is summarised as "harvest yield of the eponymate of Mušallim-Adad", so that like most of the other texts in this group, it is plainly an annual summary of the barley harvest from state land, followed in the second half by an analysis of how the amount recovered was used. Both halves follow a regular format, which looks simple at first sight, but when examined more closely raises a number of problems of interpretation. The harvest of grain (ŠE, probably always barley) comes from four farms in the district of Durkatlimmu,¹¹³ each under a different chief farmer: three of the farms are the same size, 120 *iku*, in the region of 43.2 ha, while the fourth, described as "with furrows" (*ša šar-è*), is only 50 *iku* (ca. 18 ha).¹¹⁴ Röllig identified this phrase as referring to irrigated land, presumably because, as in the south of Mesopotamia, the irrigation process required rather more elaborate furrowing than the normal dry farming ploughing produced.¹¹⁵ That it is successful is evident from the recorded yields: in

¹¹³ The location in Durkatlimmu is certain from other texts which state this explicitly.

¹¹⁴ Röllig 2008, 23 lists the occurrences of this word, which he identifies with Babylonian *šer'u* "furrow". Reculeau 2011, 84–6 makes a strong case for reading the first syllable of this word *šar* in the light of the writings *ša-ar-è-e* (No. 75:3) and *ša ša-ra-è* (No. 79:7). These seem to be perfectly acceptable Assyrian forms for the word (cf. Bab. *zēru* versus Ass. *zar'u*), and I see no need to posit some other word as Reculeau suggests.

¹¹⁵ Reculeau 2011 follows Kühne in assuming that all cereal fields at Durkatlimmu must have been irrigated because of the climatic conditions. Hence in his opinion the special character of the *šar'u* fields cannot have been that they (alone) were irrigated. Nevertheless, if *šar'u* is simply the Assyrian form of *šer'u*, Röllig's assumption that these fields were

Table 5.3. *Harvest yields in homers per iku from different chief farmers*

Limmu no.*	Text No.	Iluma-abi	Sin-mušešib	Ittabši-lešer	Balassu-ereš	Erib-ili	Amurru-šumu-lešer	Erib-ili/Sin-ašared
7	67	0.6	0.4	0.55				(flooded)
11	63	1.13	0.78	0.85				1.69
15	60	1.1	1.68	1.35				2.95
23	64	0.55	0.35	0.44				2.1
26	66			0.54	0.7		0.53	1.2
28	68			0.5		0.46	0.33(!)	2.0

* Year number following Röllig's list of eponyms (2008, 4; see Appendix 2).

this particular instance, the dry farmed fields gave yields of 0.7, 0.54 and 0.53 homers per *iku*, whereas on the irrigated land the yield rises to 1.2 homers, and a similar difference can be observed in the accounts from other years, when the chief farmer was Erib-ili, in year 7, and thereafter Sin-ašared, as shown in Table 5.3.

The scribes total the harvest from all four farms, and calculate from this an average yield (despite the discrepancy between dry and irrigated fields), and then give us the breakdown of how the total recorded was disposed of. Almost invariably in these harvest accounts the seed corn reserved for the following year is listed first. Thus in No. 66, the 123 homers of seed corn would be required to sow the 410 *iku* listed in the first half of the account at a rate of 3 *sūtu* (0.3 homer) per *iku*, and this rate is explicitly specified in some of the less telegraphic texts, for example No. 60:18–19 “150 homers seed corn for cultivating 500 *iku*, it will be sown at 3 *sūtu* per (*iku*)”.¹¹⁶

The next entry is almost always feed for the oxen who will plough the fields, two animals for each plough. Again, some texts include the calculations, which specify that they receive 1.5 *qū* daily for a period of 6 months: in the case of No. 66 we would have to assume there were as many as four additional oxen for the sesame, giving a total of 26, in order to reach the amount of 70.3 homers (see Röllig 2008, 116 ad loc.), but in other texts the arithmetic is precise: for example No. 60:20–1 “81 homers grain, rations of 30 oxen for 15 ploughs, they will eat for 6 months at a rate of 1.5 *qū*” [30 (animals) x 6 (months) x 30 (days) x 0.015 homers = 81].¹¹⁷ No attempt is made to assign oxen to the individual chief farmers or to their separate fields; the numbers mentioned were presumably in a common pool or at least treated as a single resource by the accountants. The number of animals to be fed varies between 24 and 32. This variation does not correlate precisely with the areas of land to be ploughed, but very

prepared for irrigation with special furrowing remains attractive, and I do not feel competent to pass judgement on whether rain-fed agriculture was really an impossibility.

¹¹⁶ 150 ANŠE [ŠE.NU]MUN ša 500 IKU a-ra-še 3BĀN.TA.ĀM i-za-ru. This clause also in Nos. 63, 65, 69–71, 73–79, 81–2. It is worth noting that these statements assume that the sowing rate will be identical for both the irrigated and the dry-farmed fields. No. 72 has a lower rate (102 homers to 250 *iku*).

¹¹⁷ 81 ANŠE ŠE ŠUKU-at 30 GU₄.MEŠ ša 15 [GIŠ].APIN.MEŠ ša 6 ITI UD.MEŠ 1 ½ qa.TA.ĀM e-ku-lu.

generally where the area is 350 *iku*, there are usually 24 or 26 oxen, while 30 or 32 animals are mentioned where the plots total between 400 and 500 *iku* (see Röllig 2008, 27 Tabelle 9). This means that the number of animals was not derived by the scribe arithmetically from the area, but is probably a factual statement about the current joint holdings of the chief farmers. The period of 6 months for which the oxen receive grain is standard, but we are not told which 6 months: this can hardly have been a continuous period from the earliest autumn ploughing until 6 months later, because the demand for their services came at different seasons throughout the year. Röllig suggests that they would have been used in threshing, and we do believe that the Middle Assyrian farmers used threshing sledges, called *namšarâte*, which were presumably animal drawn. These would not of course have been used until after the harvest, when the grain needed to be threshed, which cannot have been earlier than May, perhaps more likely June, and certainly more than 6 months away from the first ploughing. In other words, the fodder would not have been given to the oxen daily for a single continuous 6-month period, but as and when the seasonal schedule of work demanded, on the instructions of the chief farmers. It seems highly improbable that the amounts of grain actually fed to the oxen in fact corresponded exactly to the precise collective calculations presented in these texts: this is surely a prediction, or rather an estimated allocation, based as we have seen not on the size of the farm but on the number of animals, which must also have come under the administrative control of the palace.

A similar situation must apply to the third section of the outgoings, which states the rations for the dependent workers (*šiluhlu*). They too are simply mentioned as a group, not assigned to individual chief farmers. Presumably they were field labourers, but this is not stated (and only in the extra detail in No. 73 do we have a variation from the *šiluhlu*, with 22.92 homers from the harvest at Duara issued to 60 palace slave women). Like the ox fodder, this must be a pre-emptive estimate for the coming year. In most cases, though not in No. 66, it is specified that the rations are for the full 12 months of the year, but unfortunately we cannot extrapolate their daily ration from the totals issued because, unlike the oxen, we are not told how many workers there are.

With all three types of outgoings, we have to resolve practical issues without specific data from the texts. Although the amounts listed are plainly estimates, it does not mean that they are merely abstractions. While any surpluses over and above their needs were taken over by the palace and stored, as we shall see, this is not stated for the amounts allocated to the farmers, and the likelihood is that grain agreeing with the estimates was indeed left in the control of the chief farmers. This seems the only reasonable reconstruction, and it may partly be supported by the fact that in several cases the scribes specify which *sūtu* measure was used for each allocation, often a different one for different purposes (e.g. No. 62, the *hiburnu sūtu* for the harvest and the old *sūtu* for the workers' rations, or No. 72, the *hiburnu* for the ox feed but the old *sūtu* for the workers' rations), which seems to prove that the amounts were physically measured out. Unfortunately, unlike the palace's share, we are not told where or how they would have stored it, nor is it explained how and when the amounts would have been divided and distributed.

Grain Storage

The palace must have hoped that after all the outgoing had been issued, some grain would remain for its own purposes. This was not always the case: in No. 79 the harvest had not taken place because of enemy action, but the seed corn and animal and human rations were issued, “withdrawn from the old barley”.¹¹⁸ Even when a harvest had taken place, the grain allocated as outgoing might amount to the total of the recorded harvest, and in this case the text may state “it was fully issued” (*gammur tadin*) as in No. 66, and a few other texts (Nos. 73; 74; 77).¹¹⁹ More usually, though, the outgoing is totalled, occasionally identified as *talpittu* or “expenditure”¹²⁰ and followed by a note of the surplus or remaining balance (*rehtu*), which had been put into storage. The normal location was a “granary” *karmu*: sometimes the text merely says that the surplus “was poured into the granary” (*ina* (é)*karme tabik*), or once “into one granary” (No. 60:24) or even “into two granaries” (*i+na* 2 [or 3?] é*kar-ma-ni* No. 75:22), but not infrequently the scribe provides a rather more specific description of the storage facility. This is encountered in the regular harvest allocations, but there is also a smaller group of tablets solely devoted to recording the storage destination of state harvests (Nos. 83 [sesame], 84–7, 89–91, 93 [all barley]).

Barley Storage Memorandum (Röllig 2008 No. 89)

(Seal impression)

1 ME 90 ANŠE ŠE

ša li-me 'İR-DINGIR.MEŠ-ni

86 ANŠE ŠE

ša li-me '10-ú-ma-i

31 ANŠE ŠE

ša li-me 'a-bat-te

DUMU 10-šam-ši

47 ANŠE ŠE

ša li-me 'a-bat-te

DUMU 10-MU-le-šir

84 ANŠE ŠE ša li-me

^{1,d}a-šur-da-a-an

ŠU.NÍGIN 4 ME 38 ANŠE ŠE

i+na É kar-me ša tar-ši

É? rug²-bi? ša a-na e-ra-be

a-na šu-mi-la-a-ni i-na(-)a^hi-ta

a-na SUMUN ta-bi-ik

¹ma-su-ku ^{lu}qe-pu

¹iš-tu-10-gab-bu DUB.SAR

190 homers of grain

of the eponymate of Urad-ilani,

86 homers of grain

of the eponymate of Adad-uma'i

31 homers of grain

of the eponymate of Abattu,

son of Adad-šamši,

47 homers of grain

of the eponymate of Abattu,

son of Adad-šumu-lešir

84 homers of grain of the eponymate
of Aššur-da'an.

Total 438 homers of grain,

in the granary which is opposite(?)

the ... which on entering

is on the left...

has been poured onto the old (grain).

Massuku, the representative,

Ištu-Adad-gabbu, the scribe.

¹¹⁸ i+na ŠE SUMUN na-áš-ra, No. 79:23.

¹¹⁹ The phrase *gammur tadin* is restricted to texts where there is no remainder (*rehtu*) to pass on to the palace; although it is restored by Röllig in No. 77:13 [*ga-a*]m-rù), in fact the copy clearly has here [ša 12 ITI]UD.MEŠ which we would expect to find between *šiluḥli* and *tadin*. Note the comparable comment in a similar Aššur text *re-eḫ-tu-šu la-áš-šu* “There is no remaining balance from it” (MARV 3.10:12; 26; Freydank 1994a, 24).

¹²⁰ For the meaning, and the reading *talpittu* as opposed to *ripitu*, see p. 143.

*pi-šèr-ti ka-ru-e**ma-di-id*ITI *ḥi-bur* UD.20.KÁM *li-mu*^{1.d}*a-šur-da-a-an*

Measured as the “release of the corn-heaps”.

20th Ḥibur, eponymate
of Aššur-da’an.

This text is of interest on several counts. Our now familiar duo, Massuku the *qēpu* with a scribe, oversaw the deposit of the current year’s consignment, in this case, rather unusually for Durkatlimmu, sealing the tablet.¹²¹ The date indicates that these storage memoranda might be drawn up on the same day as the annual harvest accounting, but we see that the palace kept track of incoming grain from as far back as five years. The storage location is unfortunately difficult to reconstruct in two places, but the description of the building, followed by the details of the grain’s position within it, is characteristic of the other grain storage memoranda from Durkatlimmu, which reveal a wide range of storage facilities, fully discussed in Röllig 2008, 25–6. Some of the “granaries” (*karmu*) are not further described, but one is specified as being “on the terrace” (*ša tamlē*, No. 86), or even more precisely “in the granary on the terrace which is at the opening of the gate for entering the big terrace” (No. 87).¹²² Another granary was “adjacent to the oil-house” (Nos. 76; 77), but the state’s grain was also stored variously in the *bēt ḥašime* (another grain storage structure, No. 82), in a tower (*asaittu*) in front of a gate and at other less transparent facilities. Some of the granaries were not at Durkatlimmu, but in the town of Duara, where there was a separate state farm which was sometimes included in the Durkatlimmu accounts and sometimes recorded separately. There were regular granaries here, mentioned for example in the harvest allocations Nos. 64 and 81, but from the storage memoranda Nos. 84 and 90 we learn that as well as granaries “opposite the gate” and “on the right, inside the tower” some were attached to private houses: 155 homers of barley in two granaries in the “house of Ḥulalu”, and “120 homers of barley in 1 granary of the house of Enlil-aḥa-ereš, blind, palace slave” (both in No. 90).

As Röllig observes, the elaborate descriptions of the granaries and similar facilities underline the importance attached to the provision of proper storage (2008, 26). This was not a peculiarity of the Durkatlimmu officials, since occasional texts from Aššur and Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta give similarly detailed accounts of the storage arrangements. MARV 2.23 gives us for instance “395 homers of grain stored on the right in the granary which is alongside the brewer’s oven when entering the courtyard of the granary”,¹²³ while in MARV 5.83 we read “638 homers of grain which is stored in the *bēt qupte* which is at the entrance of the palace threshing-floor of the town of Uzbu”.¹²⁴

¹²¹ Since there is little reason to see this as a bilateral document, the seal impression on this tablet may be a rare instance of an official’s seal used to signify his confirmation of the correctness or authenticity of the document. Röllig ad loc. comments that since the text is evidently a complete record of the grain supplies of Durkatlimmu, both the *qēpu* and the scribe are named and the tablet is sealed. This may broadly be correct, but it would be good to have a more precise rationale for the sealing.

¹²² For a comprehensive listing of *karmu* in published Middle Assyrian texts, including such descriptions, see Llop in Faist and Llop 2012. The word is usually preceded by É, but there are enough instances where É is absent to support Llop’s opinion that it has to be seen as a determinative, not as the first component of a phrase *bēt karme*.

¹²³ See Jakob 2003, 325.

¹²⁴ See Freydank 1997a, 131–3; for *quptu*, *qupātu* etc., apparently yet another storage facility cf. Jakob 2003, 327–9, and for grain storage facilities in general Jakob 2003, 320–8; Llop 2005a throughout.

Other Crops

The overwhelming majority of the harvest from the palace farms was barley (ŠE), but in three instances (Nos. 63; 67; 82) the harvest allocations record wheat as well. At Durkatlimmu, small plots of 17 *iku* of wheat (GIG.MEŠ)¹²⁵ were cultivated alongside the barley by the three chief farmers of dry-farmed land in No. 63 (the same area also in No. 95), while in No. 67 a plot of 12 *iku* was devoted to wheat in all four farms, including the irrigated plot farmed by Erib-ili (cf. Table 5.3). Wheat seems generally to have given a yield about half that of the barley. The low yield per homer may be partly explained by lower sowing rates (see Röllig 2008, 175 ad loc, and p. 121b): in No. 67 they apparently sowed only 1 *sūtu* per *iku*, but No. 96 records an issue to the chief farmers of 2.6 homers each of wheat seed (GIG NUMUN) for sowing a plot of 13 *iku* in each of the four plots, giving a sowing rate of 2 *sūtu* per *iku*, and No. 95 has the same rate for wheat seed issued along with barley seed, 3.4 homers for 17 *iku* plots of wheat. In the harvest allocations the wheat is totalled separately from barley, and an amount allocated for seed corn is specified: in No. 63 this is 10 out of a total of 19.5 homers. Wheat was not given out as fodder to the oxen, nor as rations for the *šiluhlu*. Instead, in all three texts some or all of the remainder was issued for the baking of a special kind of bread (NINDA *ta-ḫal-ta a-na e-pa-e* cf. Röllig 2008, 111 on ll. 25f.).

When mentioning the feed for oxen, the scribes occasionally mention oxen used for ploughing sesame fields: “5.4 homers of barley, rations of 2 oxen which cultivate 50 *iku* of sesame” (No. 73:20–1), but the sesame crop from those plots does not feature in the main accounts. Sesame is a summer crop, and if the month of Ḫibur fell around normal harvest time, figures for the sesame yield would not have been available. Naturally, though, the administration did retain its interest in the sesame crop, as appears from No. 97, written on the 20th of Ḫibur and hence an accountant’s note, which informs us that “The sesame from the eponymate of Libur-zanin-Aššur to the eponymate of Abattu, son of Adad-šamši [=3 or 4 years], which was in the charge of Mušriyu, the Chief Farmer, has not been received” (*la-ma maḥ-ru*), stated again for Abattu’s eponymate in No. 104. About five years later, we learn that “the sesame and spices from the eponymate of Etel-pi-Ašur until the eponymate of Aššur-bel-ilani have not been sown” (*la-ma za-ru*, No. 106).

“Spices” (*raqūtu*) are also recorded by the accountants, and it appears that they often dealt with their information about spices on the same tablet as sesame. This is probably no more than a scribal convenience, because the sesame cultivation was handled by chief farmers (as we see from the case of Mušriyu), whereas the spices were the responsibility of the gardeners: No. 105, another 20th Ḫibur accountant’s note, and thus relating to a full year, reads: “The spices in the charge of Abu-ṭab and Erib-Aššur, the gardener, for the eponymate of Adad-uma’i, and ditto [for the eponymate] of Abattu, have not been received.” This was not always the case; although in No. 104 no sesame was received, a total of 9 homers of mixed spices

¹²⁵ GIG.MEŠ in Babylonian *kibtu*, pl. *kibātu*. Syllabic writing not known to me in Middle Assyrian, but it is a feminine plural even when written as GIG without a plural sign (cf. the forms *i-za-ru-a* Nos. 63:25; 96:16; *ta-ad-na* No. 63:27).

(*ra-qu-tu sa-mu-ḥu-tu*) was received in the eponymate of Abattu. We know from Nos. 101¹²⁶ and 102–3 which spices they were: coriander,¹²⁷ *šāmutu*, *samīdu*, *sabibiānu* (cumin?) and *naniu* (mint?). From No. 101 we learn that “spices of the palace” were also under the charge of representative Massuku and his scribe Ištu-Adad-gabbe: they had been withdrawn from the storeroom (*bēt nakkamte*) and issued to the governor Eṭir-Marduk for consumption (*tākultu*) at Aššur (in “the city centre”, *libbi āli*).

The Palace Farms – Unresolved Issues

It seems that the “harvest allocation documents” were intended to provide an annual record of the amount of grain due to the palace from the three or four chief farmers it employed on palace land, after they had carried out their accounting procedures, which involved making deductions for necessary expenses: that is to say, from the total output of the harvest (*tēlīt ebūri*) at the end of the agricultural year the administration set aside amounts allocated for the seed corn, ox fodder and workmen’s rations for the coming year, and calculated what remained. This was the amount which would normally be handed over to the palace for storage, unless, rarely, it remained “in his hand” (No. 65 at Duara).¹²⁸ In one exceptional instance the remaining barley “went to the king’s seal”,¹²⁹ the precise implications of which we do not know. The word (annual) “record” was chosen with care. Since the three or four chief farmers are included on each tablet, and the expenses allocated to them are not divided up among the individuals they cannot have functioned as bilateral documents regulating their obligations: such may well have existed but as far as I am aware none is published. These are instead unilateral records compiled for the internal purposes of the administration. The information it compiled on these tablets included (1) a summary of the annual harvest on each farm; (2) a statement of the amount received and stored by the palace; (3) more or less precise details of where the grain was stored, but other issues are not addressed and need to be further explored.

One question that arises is what happened to the large proportion – sometimes even the entirety – of the harvest, which remained somehow and somewhere under the control of the chief farmers and did not end up in one of the state-controlled granaries. Presumably the calculations of the amount due to the palace took place when the entire harvest (*tēlīt ebūri*) was measured, a process probably designated by the phrase *karū’a pašāru* “to release the grain-heaps”, on the occasion of which the grain was described as *pišerti karū’è*. This was the moment when the total yield from each farm was determined, and it was divided, either physically or on paper, among those with claims on it.¹³⁰ At this juncture the chief farmers

¹²⁶ From the antiquities market, see Röllig & Tsukimoto 1999, where these spice texts are fully discussed.

¹²⁷ Röllig’s copies of Nos. 102 and 103 support Wiggermann’s reading of these entries as ŠE.LÛ = kisibiru (Wiggermann 2000, 197¹⁵).

¹²⁸ For commodities remaining “in the hand of” someone, compare the wool, goat hair and butter remaining “in the hand of” the flock-master in No. 51.

¹²⁹ *re-eḥ-tu a-na NA₄KIŠIB LUGAL ta-lik* (No. 71:18–19).

¹³⁰ For these procedures see Postgate 2013.

will have been awarded their allocation, but where they may have stored it remains unknown to us. Maybe this was the situation referred to in No. 65 by “in his hand” (*ina qāti-šu*), but we have no other clues. Obviously each of the chief farmers would have needed unfettered access to his own seed corn and rations for oxen and workmen in the course of the year, but in the harvest allocation records the expected outgoings of all three or four farms were grossed together as a single total. Should we deduce from this that they were stored together in some commonly accessible facility, or was each chief farmer’s share kept separate, as seems more likely? This does not emerge from the texts we have at present.

What was done with the grain which went into the palace granaries? Some we know was kept for future years, because we find “old grain” in storage, apparently from as many as 4 years back (see No. 89), and sesame was stored over a period of at least 3 years at Durkatlimmu (No. 83). The old grain is also mentioned when it is used to meet a shortfall in a bad year: in the eponymate of Aššur-nadin-apli (year 30), No. 74 records that 66.41 homers of grain was withdrawn from “the granary of old grain” (*É kar-me ša ŠE SUMUN*) when there was no yield from the 100 *iku* farm at Duara because it had not been harvested (*la in-ni-ši-id*).¹³¹ A reason is not given, but in years 36 and 37 we are left in no doubt as to the cause of a similar problem not only at Duara again, but also at all four farms at Durkatlimmu:

Röllig 2008 No. 79:9–15

ŠU.NÍGIN 450 ANŠE ŠE	Total: 450 homers(!) of grain
<i>ša li-me e-tel-pi-i-^aa-šur</i>	of the eponymate of Etel-pi-Aššur
<i>ša i+na pa-ni na-ak-ri</i>	which, on account of the enemy,
<i>la-a i-ni-ši-du-ú-ni</i>	was not harvested (and)
<i>i+na li-me ¹ú-šur-nam-kur-LUGAL</i>	in the eponymate of Ušur-namkur-šarri
450 IKU <i>la-a i-na-re-še</i>	450 <i>iku</i> was not cultivated,
<i>la-a i-ši-id</i>	no harvest took place.

Despite the scribe’s mistake in writing “homer” instead of *iku*, and the rather dodgy syntax, the meaning is clear. It appears the situation did not improve much in the following year: No. 80 (year 39), as emended following Freydank 2010a, 98, includes the statement: “100 *iku* of Duara was not cultivated (*la a-ri-ši*). The enemy took the town Duara”. Political disruption was not the only hazard, though. In year 9 the plot of 50 *iku* of irrigated land in No. 70 was not harvested (*la-a in-ni-ši-id*); no reason is given, but of the same plot in year 7 the scribe in No. 67:12 writes “it was flooded and was not harvested” (*ra-ḫi-iš la-a in-[ni-ši-id]*).

It is clear that the chief farmers did not have a predictable enterprise. In addition to the expected higher yields on the irrigated plot at Durkatlimmu, examination of the annual harvests reveals some variation between the yields from the different dry-farmed plots, with “Field 2” regularly achieving better yields than the others, but there is greater variation from

¹³¹ Storage of old grain is also in evidence at Tell Sabi Abyad (Wiggermann 2000, 180, 195) and in the Aššur texts: MARV 2.23:22’-24’ (grain “was poured on top of the old grain of the eponymates of X and Y” *i-na UGU ŠE SUMUN ... ta-bi-ik*), or brought in to meet the deficit of the current year MARV 3.4:rev.2’-4’ (“Total of 397 homers of old grain of the eponymate of Ištar-ereš [year 13] was recovered from the granaries (*iš-tu É ḫa-ši-ma-te ḫa-aṭ-ṭa*) and issued in the eponymate of Lullayu [year 14]”).

one year to another, with No. 74 reporting drastically lower yields on all fields compared with other years (see Tabelle 6, Röllig 2008, 24). In the case of sesame and spices, it seems that the sowing and harvesting was even more irregular.

Plainly the palace would have been well aware that harvests could fail or be reduced to a level which yielded no surplus, and would have reckoned to keep a reserve for bad years, but how else did the administration use its supplies? Unfortunately this is not information these documents can give us: just occasionally in the expenditure section of the harvest allocation texts we learn that issues were made directly by the chief farmers. These included one lot of 12 homers of grain “rations for 2 horses for state-service” (ŠUKU 2 ANŠE.KUR.RA *ša il-ki*, No. 69:26), and a few issues “for consumption” (*ana tākulte*).¹³² As much as 60 homers of grain went *ana tākulte* in No. 67:28, and 18 homers in No. 78:18. In No. 101 as we have seen a consignment of spices was withdrawn from the storeroom for the governor (*bēl pāḫiti*) to provide for consumption (*tākultu*) at “the city centre” (*libbi āli*). This means Aššur, and it is possible, if not probable, that the other issues “for consumption” all refer to the requirements of the central administration based at Aššur. Finally, No. 92 is a unique text which records the issue of 10 homers of grain “harvest yield” belonging to the palace to four Assyrians each belonging to a different “Board” (*lē’u*)¹³³, who were evidently engaged on state business transporting grain and needed this as fodder for their horses and other animals (*ú-ma-mi*, presumably mules and/or donkeys). This transaction was authorised by Massuku the representative and his scribe, no doubt in response to an order from outside Durkatlimmu, and in all these cases we can guess that the issues were probably requested by the central Assyrian administration, since they have to do with horses involved in state service and state consumption. Such issues from the harvest yield before the allocation process are therefore rather like the animals issued from the state flocks by their shepherds: they are disposed of on the orders of the administration, and hence are not debited to the chief farmers at the end of the year.

They are, however, the exception. For the most part we must assume that the palace used the grain and other crops only after they had been deposited in the various store places under its control. We can only guess at present how the place consumed its supplies. The relatively small amounts of sesame will presumably have mainly been processed into oil, requiring the

¹³² For *tākultu* see Röllig and Tsukimoto 1999, 431⁷, citing instances of royal or palace feasts (*tākultu šarri*, *tākulte ša ēkalli*, also a *tākulte ša GIŠ.GIGIR.MEŠ* “feast of chariots”) from Durkatlimmu. The word does often refer to ceremonial meals, whether in a secular or temple context, but probably not exclusively. Examples from Aššur include the large volume of 5087.45 homers of grain – surely too much for a single feast – *a-na ta-kúl-te ša li-me* PN, issued to a village-inspector named Ubru (MARV 5.83:28; see Freydank 1997a, 134; cf. grain issued *ana tākulte* in a damaged context from Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, MARV 4.47: 21). In Postgate 1988a No. 99: 17 five separate small issues of grain are summed up as “Total 1.96 homers (of grain) in the charge of Melamsaḫ were issued by PN, the herald *a-na ta-kúl-te*”. Some of these issues were to “representatives who (were) with the sick”, and to foreign delegates and/or rulers of cities being looked after by an Assyrian cavalryman. This does not sound like a single ceremonial event, and it seems preferable to understand this phrase as meaning “for consumption” (or with Freydank 1997a, 133–4 “für die ‘Vorräte’”). Nevertheless, in all our contexts it sounds as though the consumption in question is by the state. See also Billa Nos. 7 and 8 where an *alahḫinu* is issued with grain *ana tākulte* and is to “have it consumed (*ú-ša-kal*)” and keep accounts (which hints perhaps at a repetitive transaction rather than a single “feast”).

¹³³ For these boards (*lē’u*) see p. 27 and Freydank 2001.

presence of at least one oil presser (*ṣāḫitu*). If we compare the Tell Chuera archive we can see that there the local palace issued barley rations to recently deported families, but also to regular employees of the state, including highly placed officials (see pp. 286–7). No doubt the palaces also had dependent workers or slaves to grind the barley and wheat into flour and bakers and *alahḫinu* to convert this into bread, as well as brewers to make beer from the barley. At Durkatlimmu the *šiluhlu* working in the fields received their rations directly from the chief farmers, while the palace issued working clothes (*mašḫuru*) to 16 to 20 farmers (LÜ.ENGAR.MEŠ) in its employment, both at Durkatlimmu itself and at Duara.¹³⁴ It is at present uncertain whether these, some of whom had linguistically Assyrian names, are one and the same as the *šiluhlu* teams of the chief farmers, whose names and numbers are not given us by the harvest allocation texts, but it seems possible, not least because at Tell Ali too the palace was involved in providing *mašḫuru* clothing to *šiluhlu* workers. As at Atmannu (see p. 296), the palace at Durkatlimmu ran its own textile industry, no doubt sourcing the raw materials from its own flocks. An account text drawn up on the 20th Ḫibur of year 26 records the wool supplied by the flock-master Adad-le'i: "Total 2 talents 22 minas of wool, work-assignment, 1 talent 36 (minas) for *mašḫuru*-garments, (and) 51 minas for the clothing of the slave-women of the palace: Total 4 talents 49 minas wool, either work-assignment or clothing, in the charge of Adad-le'i, the flock-master".¹³⁵ This text, and another from the following year (27),¹³⁶ name about 18 female weavers, and it is reasonable to assume that they were on the palace's "pay-roll" as recipients of rations from its own granaries. Direct textual evidence for this is currently lacking, but once we see 22.92 homers of grain allocated directly from the harvest yield for the rations of sixty slave women employed by the palace at Duara (Röllig 2008, No. 73).

The Palace Farms: Conclusions

We are of course looking at the state agricultural enterprise through the eyes of the upper echelons of the provincial administration. We do not get the documents which directly regulated the relations between the herdsmen or the cereal farmers and the central officialdom, nor any which recorded how the state distributed its resulting resources. We do however get a top-down view of the system, and this is because the state evidently wanted to know what went on. This was not unique to Durkatlimmu. Although the evidence is much sparser, there is a group of four tablets from a secondary context above the Aššur Temple (Pedersén's Archive M5) to show that similar records were generated at Aššur in the reign of Shalma-

¹³⁴ See Röllig 2002, 586–9, texts 7–11. The texts come from several years (years 7, 13, 14 and perhaps 31 in Röllig's sequence); there seem to have regularly been about 16 "farmers" at Durkatlimmu, many of them recurring in two or more years, and in text No. 8 three are also listed from Duara. The recipients are collectively identified as "farmers" (LÜ.ENGAR.MEŠ, No. 7:19; cf. 9:17) although one of them, who has the same name as one of the farmers, Piradi, is given the profession LÜ.MUK.GI(.MEŠ) which Röllig takes to be *sassinu* = bowmaker.

¹³⁵ Röllig 2002, 590: ²¹ ŠU.NÍGIN 2 GÜ.UN 22 MA.NA SÍG.MEŠ GIŠ.GÀR ²² 1 GÜ.UN 36 ša ^{16g}maš-ḫi-ri ²³ 51 MA.NA a-na lu-bu-ul-tu ša GÊME.MEŠ Ê.GAL-lim ²⁴ ŠU.NÍGIN-ma 4 GÜ.UN 49 MA.NA SÍG.MEŠ ²⁵ lu-ú GIŠ.GÀR lu-ú lu-bu-ul-tu ²⁶ ša ŠU ^{1d}IM-le-i NA.GAD.

¹³⁶ Arnaud 1991, No. 103, from the antiquities market but certainly from the Durkatlimmu palace archive, edited in Röllig 2002, 591–2.

neser I. MARV 5.83 records the issue of a total of 5,087.45 homers (mostly the *pišerti karūe* of the previous year) to Ubru, the village inspector. This is overseen or authorised by Aššur-idnanni, son of Bel-qarrad, the representative (*qe-pu*), and Eṭir-Aššur, son of Urad-Kube, the scribe. It cannot be coincidental that these two officials are listed in this order at the end of the grain allocation text, exactly as are Massuku, the *qēpu* and his scribe, Ištu-Adad-gabbe, in the Durkatlimmu harvest allocation texts. Other Aššur texts are remarkably similar to the Durkatlimmu harvest allocations, principally MARV 2, 23.¹³⁷ This begins with the harvest yields from three farms each of 200 *iku*, and a fourth of 300 *iku*. Exactly as at Durkatlimmu, each farm is under a chief farmer (GAL LÚ.GIŠ.APIN.MEŠ), and the areas of land are in round numbers (200 or 300 *iku*), a sure sign that we are looking at the state domain. After stating the amount harvested and the area cultivated, we have the statement of yield (n ANŠE.TA.ÀM *ittalka*) just as in most of the Durkatlimmu texts. Although the central section of MARV 2.23 is badly broken, it is clear there must have followed the details of the allocation, because rev. 7'–8' mention amounts issued to the *šiluḫlu* of Reš-nebiri, and there then follow elaborate details of how the “remainder of his yield”¹³⁸ was stored, involving adding it to 2,612.26 homers of grain, “the remainder of the harvest yield” from one or more previous years. Unfortunately the location of Reš-nebiri is not known to us, but it was probably within or adjacent to the province of Ḫiššutu, which is mentioned in MARV 2.23:20 and is regularly included in the list of provinces supplying offerings, after Šib/manibe and before Šimi, so perhaps east of the Tigris. Because of the poor condition of the text, it is not clear whether the grain was stored in Ḫiššutu or at Aššur, but another grain allocation text from the same provenance has a concluding section which reads as follows:

MARV 3.4: rev. 5'–9' (cf. Freydank 1994a, 22)

pa-ḫu-tu ša ^{urru}*né-mad-^deš₈-tár ša ŠU* ^{1.d}*be-er–DINGIR*
te-li-it e-bu-ri ša li-me ^{1.d}*be-er–EN–li-i-te*
ša i+na li-me ¹*lu-la-ie-e* ^{1.d}*a-šur–DUMU.ÚS–[SU]M-na*
DUMU ap-pa-iu-ú-te qe-pu ^ù*IM–M[U–x DUB.SAR]*
ip-šu-ru-ú-ni

Province of Nemad-Ištar, in the charge of Ber-ili:
 Harvest yield of the eponymate of Ber-bel-lite
 which, in the eponymate of Lullayū, Aššur-apla-iddina
 son of A., representative, and Adad- ... [... the scribe]
 withdrew.

The obverse of the tablet lists the grain from two farms of 300 *iku*, each under a chief farmer, giving a “total of 1460 homers of grain (measured at) the release of the grain-heaps, harvest yield of 600 *iku* of field of the town of Nemad-Ištar”. It then has the unusual statement that the grain was “all of it poured and covered over in the granary at the palace threshing-floor in a *qubattu*”. The next section of the text is lost, but it is clear from the reverse that the expected allocations, including “rations of the cattle” (ŠUKU-*at* ÁB.GU₄.MEŠ, rev. 1'), had to be made from grain held over from a previous year, and this suggests that it was indeed the case that no balance from the current year's grain was available to the local palace because it had all been allocated to the farmers' needs for the following year. In the concluding section we

¹³⁷ See on these texts Postgate 1990; Freydank 1991d, 37–40; 1994a, 16–21; Wiggermann 2000, 180.

¹³⁸ *re-eh–[ti]* [*t*]^r*e-li^r–ti-šu* (so Freydank 1991d, 36), but the correct restoration is uncertain, another possibility worth considering is [*pi*–]šèr'-*ti-šu* (for *pišertu* on its own, without *karūe*, cf. MARV 3.4:11).

learn that the officials withdrawing the previous year's harvest yield were a *qēpu* and another, whose profession as a scribe I have restored by comparison with the parallel contexts at Durkatlimmu (Massuku, the *qēpu*, and his scribe), and at Aššur (Aššur-idnani, the *qēpu*, and his scribe, MARV 5.83:29'–30').¹³⁹ MARV 5.83 comes from the same tablet find as MARV 3.4 and MARV 2.23, as does one more text of the same kind, MARV 3.10 (Freydank 1994a, 23–7), which is concerned with the harvests at Turšan, east of Atmannu on the Lower Zab, and two other places called Tarbašhe and Sira which are presumably in the vicinity. We thus have harvest allocation documents from this archive in the capital relating to Assyrian territory east of the Tigris (MARV 3.10), west of Nineveh (Nemad-Ištar, MARV 3.4),¹⁴⁰ and probably in the north-east (Hiššutu); from MARV 3.4 it seems that the agriculture was organised through the provincial system, and that in at least two of these places, as at Durkatlimmu, the local officials who took delivery of the harvest were a representative (*qēpu*) and a scribe acting as a pair.¹⁴¹ It therefore demonstrates that the long-lived system of annual harvest allocation accounting we can observe at Durkatlimmu was operating in other parts of the kingdom.¹⁴² Possibly in all such situations the “rep and the scribe”, like Massuku at Durkatlimmu, were not only responsible for the cereal harvest, but reported on the palace's other crops and the animal husbandry programme.

Durkatlimmu: Conclusions

The texts in Röllig 2008 are clearly the product of a deliberate and long-standing tradition of monitoring the productivity and management of the state's directly administered farms and animal husbandry. This was already in place well before the end of Shalmaneser's reign, and Durkatlimmu was in no way unique. The texts from Tell Ali show that the state maintained its own flocks of sheep and goats in other provinces, while the establishment of state-run farms is attested at Tell Chuera. We have seen evidence that similar standardised plots were entrusted to chief farmers in several other provinces, and the productivity there was similarly monitored by a *qēpu* and his scribe. The role of this pair may be significant: if in these contexts *qēpu* stands for “(king's) representative”, it raises the possibility that he was appointed directly by the central government to act as its permanent informant (even if not explicitly an auditor of accounts) in the provincial administration, rather than a member of the provincial hierarchy answerable to the governor. The fact that records relating to a number of state farms in different provinces were found at Aššur suggests that the data recorded by Massuku

¹³⁹ Edition: Freydank 1997a, 131.

¹⁴⁰ Location traditionally west of Nineveh e.g. Tell Afar, after Forrer (Nashef 1982, 204). This province must have been renamed or incorporated into another province later, since it does not feature in the Offerings Archive province lists.

¹⁴¹ That Massuku worked formally in association with his scribe is clear from the address on a letter envelope sent by the high-ranking Salmanu-mušabši “to Massuku and Ištu-Adad-gabbe” (Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, No. 35).

¹⁴² Although the substance of these texts seems very similar, the verbal formulae are not completely stereotyped. For differences note e.g. the use of *uppuš* “calculated” in MARV 3.10:17; the phrase *rehtušu laššu* (3.10:12; 26'), the use of *mēreše* “cultivated (land)” in MARV 2.23: 7 as opposed to simple A.ŠA “field” in MARV 3.4:2, 8 and A.ŠA *a-ra-še* in MARV 3.10:7.

and his scribes, although understandably retained in the provincial archive for us to recover, would also have been transmitted to the central administration at Aššur.

The special character of both the animal husbandry and the agriculture documentation published so far from Durkatlimmu is reflected in the fact that the tablets can virtually all be characterised as unilateral memoranda, with no seal impressions or other signs that they acted as bilateral instruments. This also applies to the textile memoranda published in Röllig 2002, some of which (Nos. 5, 6, 10, 12 and Arnaud 1991 No. 103) also clearly belong to the practice of annual stock-taking since they are dated to the 20th Ȝibur. By comparison with the other archives we have seen we may expect that the provincial administration did indeed make use of sealed bilateral documents – such as the receipts attested at Tell Ali or the work and delivery contracts best attested in the Stewards' Archive but also found at Tell Chuera. – but as yet no examples are published.

Holes in The Canvas

Before drawing any broad conclusions we need to ask to what degree the archives we possess are a reliable reflection of what was actually written. As far as the city of Aššur is concerned, it should be borne in mind firstly that there are further archives which are known to us but have not been discussed here, most notably the archive from the western side of the city associated with the name of Ubru.¹ This includes texts which shed interesting light on the administration's internal procedures, in particular quasi-legal proceedings within the administrative structure.² Llop Raduà is preparing a study of this archive, and will also provide us with editions of the texts from the state granaries which were on the western side of the city, mostly lists of personal names on the receiving end of the supplies. Secondly, a glance at the distribution of archives across the plan of the city (Figure 4.1) reminds us that except in the northern area of public architecture, we have only a sample recovered by the excavators' test trenches (Suchgraben), 10 m each 100 m, implying that at best we are probably looking at no more than 10 per cent of what survives and an even smaller percentage of what was actually committed to writing.³ In the provinces too there is more variety to be expected once the remaining texts from Durkatlimmu and Tell Sabi Abyad become available, not to mention the newly excavated archive from Tell Fakhariyah. Even without these, the variety – or lack of replication – in the archives we do possess means that we should expect the scribes to have been involved in a further range of state (and private) activities on which at present we have no information.

Time Depth

The distribution of Middle Assyrian documents across time is far from even and poses significant questions. Material from the 14th century comes almost exclusively from the city of Aššur itself, and it is by no means self-evident where else in the later confines of Assyria we should expect to find legal documentation of the same sophistication at this date. Nor can we be sure that the state's activities were as painstakingly documented as later; even

¹ See Llop 2009. For another archive, to do with bread production and delivery, see p. 117.

² That is, the so-called *gerichtliche Ladungen* (Llop Nos. 133–9).

³ On Figure 4.1 only those archives studied here are shown. For the location of other Middle Assyrian archives see the map in Pedersén 1985, 28, which underlines the point that especially south of the palace and temple area the archives come from the 10-metre Suchgraben.

if legal documents were regularly produced this need not mean that we are lacking large assemblages of written administrative texts from the time before Adad-nirari I. In the provinces especially, most of the scribal activity described previously concentrates in the reigns of Shalmaneser and Tukulti-Ninurta, when state control was introduced and consolidated across newly acquired regions, and this probably entailed changes within the older parts of Assyrian territory as well. The two 13th-century Aššur archives discussed – Babu-aḥa-iddina and Urad-Šerua – come from the households of elite families with interests or responsibilities a considerable distance from the capital, whereas the other three Aššur archives, which are from the 12th to 11th centuries, are generated by activities almost entirely within the city itself (although of course on the receiving end of materials coming in from the provinces).

As far as the provinces are concerned, it is striking that Middle Assyrian records dwindle away rapidly towards the end of Tukulti-Ninurta's reign. Our imperfect knowledge of the order of the eponyms in the 12th century in particular makes this difficult to describe with precision, but at Tell Chuera, Durkatlimmu and also at Tell al-Rimah and Tell Billa the excavations have not yielded any significant 12th-century documentation. As far as the west is concerned, there is a temptation to ask whether the absence of archives reflects the absence of the Assyrian state apparatus, or if it merely implies that the habits of bureaucratic documentation slackened across the provincial system. The province lists in the Offerings Archive include places on the Ḥabur such as (W)aššukanni or Šadikanni, but not Ḥarbu or other neighbouring cities beyond the Ḥabur such as Amimu and Saḫlala, and we must certainly allow for the possibility that some of these places were no longer under Assyrian state control, whether in consequence of Aramaean incursions and/or climatic factors, but it is hard to imagine that the same would apply to Tell al-Rimah or Tell Billa throughout the 12th and early 11th centuries, bearing in mind that a place as far north as Giricano still appears to be "Assyrian" in the 11th century.⁴ The Giricano texts do not derive from state administration, and it must at least be a hypothesis worth testing that after Tukulti-Ninurta's reign the central government of Assyria abandoned some of the bureaucratic practices expected of its provincial administrators during the expansion and consolidation of the territorial state in the 13th century, even though there remained a demand for scribes to produce legal documents. One may fairly wonder whether the reduction in literate administration was a cause or a consequence of the state's relative weakness in the 12th century.

Activities Recorded and Not Recorded

As said at the outset, it is perfectly possible that the scribes were involved in a wide range of activities not reflected in the texts we have at present. Reviewing the content of the archives discussed here, it is plain that they do inform us about the state's involvement in agriculture

⁴ There are indications that the texts from Tell Sabi Abyad include some from the earlier 12th century, and perhaps greater precision will be possible once they are fully published. This of course is technically a private establishment, and one cannot automatically assume that it precisely follows practices in the state sector.

and stock breeding, in the processing and distribution of foodstuffs, in the management of people, whether individual men or entire families and populations and in the production of textiles and military and agricultural equipment. The Ubru Archive will shed interesting light on one aspect of the interaction between the state administration and the public judicial system.

However, we are not entitled to assume that topics not covered must have been documented and that we have simply failed to stumble across the relevant archive rooms. One area of uncertainty is whether we are missing archives recording the state's interactions with its subjects rather than its own internal administration. Thus for instance, the agricultural and stock-breeding documentation from Durkatlimmu appears to be primarily concerned with enterprises initiated and directed by the state itself, not with the activities of the local population outside the state sector. Put another way, we do not seem to have texts which record agricultural taxation: there are no censuses of private landholdings or families, no mentions of state officials collecting agricultural taxes or texts listing taxes received or overdue. Is this because (1) we have just not found the relevant tablets, or (2) taxation took place but was not recorded, or (3) they really did not exact taxes on private agricultural and animal husbandry production at all? It is hard to be sure. Tax collectors (*mākisu*) did exist, but although we have receipts issued to citizens for the payment of customs dues on their imported animals and other goods,⁵ and we must presume that the takings from this went to swell the state's coffers, we have no documents from the state archives listing such income or even referring to it.

When it comes to so-called human resources, we do have a few texts referring to persons conscripted by the state for its military or civilian enterprises. In the provinces it is likely that recruitment for the state was the responsibility of the provincial governors, and this expectation is supported by a few miscellaneous texts from Tell Billa.⁶ Large numbers of specialists and ordinary labourers were required for the construction of Tukulti-Ninurta's new capital, but the texts which show us this are not in fact generated as lists of personnel but as barley accounts. One long list gives us the names of 150 "king's soldiers", who predominantly bear good Assyrian names and who sometimes serve together with their brothers, and this does seem likely to derive from a state office responsible for recruitment (see p. 26). Under the immediate authority of which official this labour force would have fallen at the capital is unclear: it may have been the *šakin māti*, governor of Aššur province, whose archives we do not have. Away from the capital, it seems probable that responsibility for ensuring those listed turned up for military (or civilian) service would have rested with the governors of the individual provinces, as the Billa texts hint, but this is no more than an assumption. In any case, one reason we have little evidence for the recruitment procedures must be because the central government kept long lists of men on wooden writing-boards (*lē'u*), which have of course perished.⁷ One of these boards was the king's own, and the four others were named after figures some of whom are known from other contexts to have been high in the state

⁵ See p. 267.

⁶ See p. 277.

⁷ See pp. 27 and 64.

hierarchy, but it remains uncertain how their role as board owners may have been related to any other office they held, and whether the person who must have been responsible under the monarch for organising the whole system would have had a civilian or a military title.

In general, indeed, we are poorly informed about the role of the king and the central state administration which was presumably nominally at least directed from his palace or palaces. The Stewards' Archive, from premises close to but not incorporated within a palace proper, sheds light on the flow of commodities but has nothing much to say about the administration of persons – so that although we have barley ration lists concerned with the construction crews at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta or with relocated families at Tell Chuera, we have none for the surely numerous staff of the royal palaces (unless they are among the recipients in the granary archive, Llop 2010). Likewise we have very little documentation from the “Foreign Office” unless one counts the Chuera directives ordering the issue of provisions to travelling foreign dignitaries. From Aššur, unlike Ḫattusa or Ugarit, we have no treaties or international correspondence – and our knowledge of the diplomatic activity of Babu-ḫa-iddina ironically comes from two copies of a Hittite letter excavated at Ḫattusa, sent by the Hittite king to him on the occasion of the succession of Tukulti-Ninurta I to the throne of Assyria.⁸

Finally, it should be noted that, because in the administrative documentation personal names are mostly used without professional titles, it is difficult for us to identify what position the various persons held within the administration, and therefore to reconstruct clear hierarchies of what today is termed “line management”. This applies in particular to the role of the scribes, which must have been very significant but is obscured by the failure to identify them as scribes when they are mentioned.

Public and Private

In an attempt to recreate the nature of Assyrian state administration the first issue to be addressed is perhaps whether the concept of state administration is an anachronism and should not be applied to Assyria at this date. Expressed differently, was there a clear demarcation between a person's or a family's private affairs and public office? This issue obviously has a bearing on the whole ethos of Assyrian state governance, and it has been raised from time to time in the Middle Assyrian context. Schloen inveighs against the use of the terms *public* and *private* and doubts whether the dichotomy they presuppose really existed (2001, 299).⁹ He cites the measured words of Buccellati: “The polarity public/private was never articulated in the social and political conceptualization of even the latest historical periods in Mesopotamia.... It was however an operative reality, inasmuch as decisions were taken and actions

⁸ Otten 1959–60.

⁹ In this he is by no means alone: cf. for example Bennet 1985, 240 referring to “the modern distinction between the public and the private sector”. However, in Márquez Rowe's discussion of private and public at Ugarit, despite phrases like “the close connection between ownership rights and positions in the ruling hierarchy makes the distinction between the private and the public sector at least as blurred” (2006, 91), the separate existence of the two sectors is still taken more or less for granted.

implemented that presupposed a real distinction between the two spheres”, but suggests that this is importing an “alien functional logic that conforms, not to the Mesopotamian data, but to the modern conception of urbanism” (Schloen 2001, 195). He pleads for us to take more account of “social actors’ understanding of their own situation”. Indeed so: if we look at original Mesopotamian data, viz the Middle Assyrian terminology, the scribes quite plainly could and normally did differentiate between commodities owned by a person and those for which (s)he was merely responsible. As already discussed in the context of the Urad-Šerua family archive and elsewhere, in the terminology of bilateral documents a very simple but nonetheless crucial contrast is expressed by the difference between items of which a creditor is the owner (*ša PN*) and those of which he is merely in charge (*ša qāt PN*);¹⁰ frequently the commodity is said to be both “belonging to the palace” and “in the charge of PN”, indicating that the proprietorial rights of the state and the responsibility of the state employee were both explicitly acknowledged (cf. pp. 258–9).

There are rare occasions, it is true, when an official appears to be recorded as the owner of the commodity but the context strongly suggests that he is only the agent of the state.¹¹ This does not change things: because we ourselves cannot always detect from a text whether the transaction concerned public or private business, it does not mean that the Assyrians themselves would not have known which it was. If for the sake of argument 40 per cent of transactions in a body of texts are explicitly identified (using the well-established criteria) as public and 40 per cent as private, leaving 20 per cent ambiguous, it does not mean that the 20 per cent in the middle are transactions which are neither one nor the other, merely that the terminology or tablet format does not in all cases convey enough information for us to decide the issue. Furthermore, while this simple contrast is of itself sufficient to establish that the Assyrian scribes distinguished between private and state property, the differing conventions for recording the liabilities of officials responsible for state property, with their less formalised adaptation of commercial or legal documentary format, are enough to show that the difference between the internal business of the state bureaucracy, and private legal transactions was recognised.¹²

Although its etymology remains obscure, the Middle Assyrian word *pittu* is generally agreed to refer to an official’s area of responsibility, and is often met with in letters, including those from and to Babu-alja-iddina and from Durkatlimmu.¹³ So in text No. 26 in Babu-

¹⁰ See Röllig 2008, 17, and note that my own view as expressed in Postgate 1988a, xiii is not exactly as described there by Röllig, but in fact agrees well with his formulation of this same distinction.

¹¹ See for example Ana-šumiya-Adad in Tell Chuera Nos. 82 (*ša*) and 83 (*ša qāt*), with comment by Jakob 2009, 111. Another case in point is the jar full of bilateral documents from the Offerings Archive, where commodities are sometimes said to be “belonging to” (*ša*) but on other occasions as “in the charge of” (*ša qāt*) the Offerings Overseer (see Table 4.4). Even if there was linguistic ambiguity here the true situation was no doubt transparent to all parties.

¹² See pp. 77–9 for the various indicators such as sealing, witnessing, and use of patronymics. Machinist’s qualms about using these rigidly to distinguish public from private are entirely justified (1982, 28). For the differentiation of private from public obligations see the passage from MARV 9.112 where Izbu-lešir’s personal loan is described (p. 125).

¹³ See on this term, and the quite frequent use of the *-u(m)*- post position (as in forms like *pi-it-tu-ka*), Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996, 146 on l. 29.

aḥa-iddina's Archive we read "(About) the wax, whether under the responsibility (*ša pi-ti*) of the house supervisor, or under the seal of Babu-aḥa-iddina", and there are plenty of similar examples of its use in the correspondence (pp. 226–7). The phrase is evidently different from *ina qāt* or *ša qāt*, which are used in legal and administrative documents, and refers not so much to actual physical control of an item as more generally to a sphere of responsibility.

Finally, it is clear that the concept of a public office was well understood. This follows from the Middle Assyrian ritual for the coronation of the king, during which he declares that "any office-holder" (*attamānu bēl pāḥiti*) should resume his office.¹⁴ That the administrative ethos was built around formal appointment to a specific office also follows from the occasional letters beginning with the correspondent wishing well "to you, your house (and) to your office" (MARV 10.90). In MARV 1.71, two "servants" of Balti-libur, in an echo of the greetings formulae of one king to another, wrote "May it be well with our lord, his chariot, his horses, and the office of our lord (*pa-ḥi-te ša EN-ni*)". While he might have been a provincial governor, that we should translate simply "office" rather than "province" is clear from other letters where the addressee was definitely not.¹⁵

Inherited Offices?

One way the public:private opposition might be blurred is when the holder of a post is able to hand it on to his son. This can be documented in a range of social contexts. Thus we find a Governor of the Land (i.e. of Aššur province) called Urad-Kube with a father and grandfather who held the same post (see Saporetti 1979a, 22, with other examples of high office in successive generations). At Tell Billa, Sin-apla-eriš takes over the post of *ḥassihlu* from his father, Aššur-kašid (pp. 269–70). At Durkatlimmu, a highly placed member of the administration called Massuku was preceded in the same role by his father, Ber-šumu-lešer (Röllig 2008, No. 4). Scribal craft was passed down from father to son not only at Aššur, as can be seen in the colophons of literary tablets there, and in the case of Ribate, the king's scribe and father of the scribe Aššur-šumi-ašbat (see Figure 3.1), but also at Nineveh, where a land transaction is witnessed by "Kidin-Enlil, scribe, son of Naḥayu, also scribe".¹⁶ In humbler professions, the brewers and bakers working for the Aššur Temple also sometimes followed in their fathers' footsteps, as we see with Šuzub-Sin, who is once listed as the father of Aššur-šuma-iddina (MARV 6.81:8), and Kutahḫu, who is also mentioned as a father (MARV 5.41:12). In MARV 6.42, Adad-mušabši and Adad-apla-ušur, the two sons of a chief oil presser called Salmanu-iqiša, each of whom owes a homer of sesame, have clearly followed him into the same busi-

¹⁴ "The king will say to them 'let each one hold his [of]fice'" (iii.12–13: *ia-ma-tu [pa-ḥ]a-su lu-ka-il*) (Müller 1937, 14). Whether in MARV 6.21 "the offices of (*pa-ḥa-te ša*) Ibašši-ilu" refer to different appointments he had held or to his provinces is unfortunately unclear due to the fragmentary condition of the text.

¹⁵ In MARV 10.90 a correspondent writes to Aba-la-ide, one of Izbu-lešir's predecessors as Offerings Overseer, and introduces the letter *ana kāša bēti-ka pāḥiti-ka lu šulmu*. The same or a similar phrase is found in the 13th century at Šibaniba in the letters Bi 61 and Bi 65.

¹⁶ Postgate 1973a, 17; the tablet is illustrated as Figure 3.1 (p. 49).

ness. In the provinces at Durkatlimmu, animal minders also follow their fathers: the ox-herd Adad-šuma-ereš is followed by his son Mušallim-Adad, while Adad-da'an and Šilli-Adad, who was probably his son, were both donkey-herds.¹⁷

Sons following their fathers in their professions is hardly a surprise in any early society, but it need not mean that they technically inherited an appointment. That does of course happen in Babylonia with the system of temple prebends, which can be sold, rented out or bequeathed, but there is no sign of this in Assyrian state administration. Some nepotism was surely practised, but we should not assume a son had a claim to succeed his father which was strong enough to override the wishes of the king or of the state administrators more generally.

Households and the State

From what we know of the Old Assyrian merchant enterprises, it is to be expected that in Middle Assyrian times too families engaged in commerce handed the business down from one generation to another,¹⁸ and if there were elite families whose wealth was founded on rural estates, the sons will naturally have needed to take over in due course as the land passed to them. Likewise in the field of government, instead of thinking of a father passing an appointment on to his son, should we perhaps treat it rather as an appointment remaining within the family? The evidence suggests that on appointment an official was not installed in a separate government establishment, but that his household would have expanded its activities to fulfil his public duties. Hence in 1988, in the context of the Urad-Šerua Archive, it was possible to write: "Apart from the palace, with the 'tablet-house' belonging to it, the only secular institution of government in the Middle Assyrian texts is the household (É = *bētu*) of individual high officials."¹⁹ Although cautious about their relative importance within the state as a whole, Machinist wrote of "large, extended families of wealth, holding estates and involved in a web of commercial relations, who have ties with, if they are not actually part of, the government".²⁰ Since then the idea of the patrimonial house has attracted attention from ancient Near Eastern historians, and one might say that it has become the flavour of the decade.²¹ Middle Assyrian "houses" have not, however, been studied in detail, and before considering whether it is reasonable to refer to them as a "secular institution of government", it will pay to survey the evidence briefly.

The Offerings Archive gives us two instances where "the House of PN" refers to the administration of a province. This occurs with Aššur-kitti-šeši, who was Governor of the Land

¹⁷ Rölli 2008, 5–6. In MARV 8.59 we meet Aššur-našir, a son of Izbu-lešir the Offerings Overseer; his own position is not stated, but it seems likely he was in the same business as his father.

¹⁸ Although as it happens Faist is unable to cite examples of sons following fathers as merchants (2001, 125).

¹⁹ Postgate 1988a, xxiii. For the "Offerings House" and the Stewards' Archive see shortly.

²⁰ Machinist 1982, 29; his general theme here needs to be read in light of the review in Postgate 1983–4.

²¹ Thanks primarily to the big book called *The House of the Father as Fact and Symbol: Patrimonialism in Ugarit and the Ancient Near East* (Schloen 2001).

(i.e. of Aššur province) for some of Izbu-lešir's period of office as Offerings Overseer. The "House of Aššur-kitti-šeši" is mentioned in MARV 8.68 as one of the houses which had granaries, but in other related texts the scribe has written *bēt šakin māti* (MARV 5.41; 5.44; 6.34; 7.76; 7.89). A comparable instance is met in MARV 6.24:10–11 where a total of 30 homers of grain is described as "fixed offering of the province of Šudu", whereas on the envelope this same grain is said to be "of the House of Kidite", a personage who recurs in MARV 7.50:6', 10' as the "Governor of [...]".²² His "House" should probably not be sought in the provincial capital at Šudu, but is presumably his family's metropolitan base at Aššur. The position with Izbu-lešir himself is less clear: the tablet of MARV 2.24 refers to the "House of Izbu-lešir", but the envelope makes mention of both "the House of Izbu-lešir, Offerings Overseer" (l. 4'), and the "Offerings House" (*bēt gināē*, l. 7'). The text is damaged, and it seems impossible to be sure whether he had two establishments, one his own residence and the other his office, or if both terms refer to the same establishment. There may well have been two, because it is likely that the Offerings House was physically located in or adjacent to the Aššur Temple and unlikely that it also served as a family household.

In the mid-12th-century Archive of Muttā, more or less voluntary contributions of sheep came into the palace from a variety of sources which included the stewards (AGRIG) of a number of "Houses" (see p.186 Table 4.8: the Houses of Sin-lušallim-šarra, Aššur-iddin, Ištār-tuballissu and Sin-uballit'). The mere fact that a household boasted a steward tends to suggest that its head was a member of the elite, but unfortunately there are few contemporary texts which can tell us whether any of them held a state office which would account for their need to make audience gifts to the current regent, Ninurta-tukul-Aššur. It is likely enough, as many of the other contributors did hold state offices, but we cannot exclude the possibility that the contributions were solely in their own private interest. Back in the 13th century Meliṣaḥ issued 40 bales of straw on the instructions of "the steward of the House of Sikku" to three persons of whom one or more are described as "follower(s) of the House of Sikku".²³ Sikku could well be the palace overseer (*rab ēkalli*) whose wife, along with the king's nurse, is presented with a donation of grain from the king (MARV 1.40). Given his title, one might expect him to reside in the royal palace, but it is equally reasonable to suppose that he transacted state business from his private residence.²⁴

A later group of texts, from Izbu-lešir's period of office as Offerings Overseer at the Aššur Temple, shows that grain managed by (and presumably belonging to) the Offerings House was in fact stored in the granaries of certain "Houses". These included the House of Aššur-kitti-šeši, but also "the House of Samnuḥa-asared"²⁵ and "the House of Ašri-ilu".²⁶ They may well have had public functions, but unfortunately Ašri-ilu is not otherwise known, and the identity

²² The traces of the name of his province might be read ^{uru}šú-[u/ú-]dī' but collation would be needed to confirm this.

²³ Postgate 1988a, No. 26, see p. 258; on Sikku here see Postgate 1982–3, 231.

²⁴ A recently published tablet (MARV 10.60) listed at least eight "Houses", including the House of Nabu-bela-ušur; this could be the steward of the same name. Some of the other names, all more or less damaged, may, with Freydank ad loc, be highly placed persons from the time of Tukulti-Ninurta.

²⁵ MARV 5.41; 5.44; 7.76; 9.112.

²⁶ MARV 7.89; 9.112.

of Samnuḫa-ašared poses problems: this is the name of the Chief Steward in the later 12th century (see p. 150), but he is not likely to have been alive at the time of these particular Offerings Archive texts. This could have been a namesake (conceivably a grandson), or maybe the name of a household head was retained after his death. The same uncertainty affects the mention of the steward of the House of Babu-aḫa-iddina in the mid-12th-century Mutta Archive: Babu-aḫa-iddina must at this date have been deceased for some time, but we cannot exclude the possibility that this was a namesake of his (e.g. a grandson). Certainly immediately after the death of the household head the house and the estate, in the sense of his aggregated property, would be referred to as “the House of PN”, as we see in the case of the royal edict MARV 4.151 which envisages payments made to creditors “from the House (É) of Aššur-tišamme” (ll. 43, 53, 63) after his death. I suspect that the house of a recently deceased person is similarly referred to in a few of the bilateral debt-notes from the jar in the Offerings Archive, for example “This grain (is) for the *pandugani*-ritual of the House of Šamaš-mušašri”.²⁷

The Evidence of the Archives

These hints in the texts can be compared with the evidence of the individual archives and their provenance. The two tablet assemblages we have from Babu-aḫa-iddina are only a fraction of more voluminous archives and are exclusively concerned with the commercial and industrial activities of his elaborate private household.²⁸ We know that some of his personal legal documents were stored in the bedroom, and if documents from his state functions were also kept in the same building complex, they were well segregated. On the other hand, in the provinces the assemblage of documents from Tell Billa, naming the father and son who were both *ḫassihlu*, is split between government administration and private affairs, and at Tell al-Rimah too a mixture of private and public back files were found in a single, albeit dispersed, context.²⁹ Back at Aššur, in Urad-Šerua's house purely private transactions over three generations as well as documents from state administration were all found together: it is clear that although for a while Melisaḫ, the father of Urad-Šerua, held a provincial governorship at Naḫur, and his son Urad-Šerua also had state duties in the area, they must have continued to run their private affairs from the family house back in Aššur, represented in some instances by their wives. Not only their public responsibilities, as for example the dossier relating to the issue of grain rations to deportees, but also their private ownership of land, as in the inventory of tablet chests, are clearly attested.

²⁷ MARV 3.47(=Freydank 1992a No.12):9; cf. MARV 3.24 (=Freydank 1992a No. 15):7 another loan *ana pandugani*, where the debtor is “Marduk-remanni, son of Nazi-Marduk of the House of Puḫunu” (see Table 4.4). Cf. also “1 sheep to the House of Aššur-reš-[...]”, quite possibly for funerary purposes (MARV 3.75:9), and the phrasing of MARV 3.73:4, where wool and goat hair in the charge of Ušur-bel-šarri is described as “of the flocks of the House of Šena” (*ša še-ni*.MEŠ *ša É 'še-na*), and is received by the provincial governor of Abilate.

²⁸ Compare Faist on Babu-aḫa-iddina's private household, concluding that “große individuelle Haushalte auf denselben Organisationsform beruhten wie der Staat” (2001, 98–9).

²⁹ As far as I am aware, the palace archive at Tell Sheikh Hamad did not yield any private legal documentation.

The broad picture therefore seems to be that in the higher echelons of the state administration the offices were entrusted to heads of elite households who led a pluralist existence, acting as the head of the family and the family's business affairs, but also carrying out their governmental duties from their personal residences in Aššur, and no doubt using their household staff for private and state business alike; or perhaps, if posted to the provinces, carrying on their personal business from residential quarters assigned to them in the state's premises ("the palace"). It seems to have been usual to refer to "the House of PN" whether state or private affairs were involved, and so we are rarely given someone's official title. Of course there were surely occasions when the tenure of public office could be turned to the holder's financial advantage, or the scribes failed to make the public:private distinction transparent, but members of Middle Assyrian society were surely well aware of the distinction and generally observed it, and we would expect nothing less from a society with a long and continuing history of commercial enterprise and ethos.

Only more prosopographical work will resolve some of the resulting uncertainties, but it is clear that in the case of the (Chief) Stewards the position was different: there seems to have been a single building or group of buildings in which the stewards' business was transacted over many decades and during the tenure of a succession of stewards who are not, as far as we can see, related. We do not seem to have any mention of the establishment, whether as "the House of the Steward", "the House of PN, the Steward" or "the House of PN",³⁰ and it is conceivable that the complex was considered part of the palace even though it lay some 50 metres to the south of both the Old and the New Palaces.

One final issue concerns the royal eunuchs, some of whom were entrusted with high offices (see pp. 28–9). They are consistently referred to as "eunuch of the king", and it seems at least possible that they were normally expected to reside in the royal palace to fulfil their special function of running the harem. Since they presumably no longer formed part of a private household and were not about to establish a new family household of their own, it would seem reasonable that if space were available they should have been accommodated within the palace precincts. Although it is obviously conceivable that with the expansion of the responsibilities of individual eunuchs they did indeed require a separate establishment, we do not at present have any mentions of the "House of Ušur-namkur-šarri" (who was for a while the Chief Steward), or the "House of Libur-zanin-Aššur".

The Impact of Government

Having seen the Assyrian government in action through the eyes and hands of its scribes, it is possible to imagine some of the effects it must have had on the places it controlled and how these may have affected the material record. This is not a simple matter of assuming a one-to-one correspondence between the picture reconstructed via the texts and that recoverable

³⁰ Unless the "House of Samnuša-ašared" refers to the steward's workplace (cf. p. 334), but this seems unlikely since at the time of the relevant texts we think Apliya was the Chief Steward.

through archaeology – it is of course essential to recreate the circumstances in which the written record and the archaeological remains were generated quite separately, and only then to attempt an integration.³¹ In the case of Assyria, the parts of the archaeological record most sensitive to and informative on the exercise of government fall into three broad categories: the evidence for the geographical spread of settlement, the presence of documentary archives and the recovery of distinctively “Assyrian” ceramics. This admittedly has more to do with the durability under ground of both fired and sun-dried clay, by comparison with other more perishable materials which could also have betrayed the hand of the Assyrian state had they survived, than with any special character of the pottery, but archaeologists are obliged to work with what they can recover.³²

Reviewing the documentation described in the preceding chapters, it is evident first of all that government activity in settlements outside the capital was mostly channelled through the staff of the palace in each provincial capital, communication with the centre being supplied by the “representative(s) of the king” (*qēp(ūt)u ša šarri*). Architecturally one must presume that the buildings from which the archives were recovered at Tell Chuera, Tell Sheikh Hamad and Tell Billa, placed close to the steep sides of their citadel mounds with the advantages of security and visibility, were indeed technically palaces (*ēkallu*) even if they may not seem too splendid now. Whether we should reckon with palaces at settlements which were not acting as provincial capitals is less clear, but at Tell Ali, for instance, the weavers “of the palace” probably occupied at least a state-owned building, and some at least of the palaces constructed by Tiglath-pileser and later kings *ina šiddi māti* (whatever that means precisely) were probably not in provincial capitals.

The Assyrian state seems to have functioned like a business venture, with the provincial palaces acting as its local branches. It is self-evident that as soon as “The Land of Aššur” became a territorial state spread across the north Mesopotamian plains, there was a need to secure its agricultural self-sufficiency. Hence at Durkatlimmu we have detailed records of the outgoings and production of four state farms, primarily growing barley but also wheat, sesame and vegetables and spices. These were managed by chief farmers answerable to the provincial palace, and at Tell Chuera it is clear that some of those doing the work of cultivation were families brought onto the scene by the Assyrians themselves, suggesting that the areas being farmed, which are neatly measured in hundreds of *iku*, were recently surveyed plots which have been newly brought, or brought back, into cultivation, rather than the result of dispossessing local inhabitants in the wake of the Assyrian annexation.³³ Also around Durkatlimmu and the secondary settlement of Duara these state farms were assigned a round number of *iku* (e.g. 100), and the same applies to state farms mentioned in harvest texts from other provincial centres which were found at Aššur (see pp. 323–4). Van Zeist assumed that the barley crop stored in the palace would have been irrigated in some way, and this remains

³¹ Compare for similar sentiments in another forum Bennet 1984; 1988.

³² A very thorough account of the archaeological evidence currently available for the Middle Assyrian period is to be found in Tenu 2009.

³³ Compare also Tell Sabi Abyad (pp. 44–5; Wiggermann 2000).

the assumption of the excavator of Durkatlimmu, but the harvest records may indicate that only one of the four farms was on irrigated terrain, which may of course in part account for the poor quality of grain he reports.³⁴ There is plentiful evidence from the early second and early first millennium BC for irrigation works along the flood valley of the Ḥabur, and this is surely where the Durkatlimmu irrigated fields must have lain, rather than on the plains each side where gravity flow irrigation would have been difficult to provide. For his new capital city Tukulti-Ninurta put in place a major irrigation project on land above the east bank of the Tigris valley in the area upstream from Aššur, and we have some of the state's documentation of land distribution there, which seems to indicate that it was not a total success.³⁵

The presence of harvest records both at Durkatlimmu and at Aššur, relating to at least three different areas, makes it clear that in the 13th century, state documentation operated in at least two tiers. Accounts were kept and information assembled at individual provincial capitals, and at some stage some of this information must have found its way back to a central office, where data on all the provinces was collated. Whether this system was maintained throughout the 12th and into the 11th century has to remain sub judice: none of the provincial sites so far excavated has yielded archives which extend this late, and although the Aššur Temple Offerings Archive provides clear evidence that relations between the provinces and the centre were sustained, there is no documentation of this process from the other end. As mentioned earlier, it also seems probable that detailed lists of men scheduled for state service were maintained centrally, and communication between the central authority and the individuals in question was presumably channelled through the provincial government.

At Durkatlimmu the palace scribes also kept an annual record of the growth and losses of state-owned herds of donkeys, cattle and sheep and goats. The cattle were needed as traction on the farms and were therefore critical to the supply of cereals; the donkeys were used for transport. At Atmannu we see that the state's flocks were partly kept to provide meat, but both here and at Durkatlimmu it is clear that their primary role was to meet the state's own needs for woollen garments, either to clothe their dependent labourers or for trading purposes. Here, no doubt, as at other seats of the administration, there must have been facilities for processing the wool and workshops for the textile workers, whatever their formal status. We have no way of assessing whether the output of the workshops in the different places was sufficient only for its own district or generated a surplus for the benefit of the central administration.

The city of Aššur had been trading in textiles and metals for centuries, and this continued. Some of our best evidence for the textile trade comes from the private establishment of Babu-ahha-iddina: he evidently employed professional textile workers on a regular basis and sent his merchants westwards to Canaan with some of the products of his workshops. Whether any of the merchants were actually members of his household remains uncertain – it is at

³⁴ Van Zeist 1999/2000, 122. Reculeau 2011 reviews this whole issue in great detail, and concludes that Kühn's assumption that agriculture without irrigation would not have been feasible on the lower stretches of the Ḥabur must be correct. If so, Röllig's interpretation of the term *šar'u* as irrigated land, which appeared intrinsically plausible, has to be revised (see p. 314).

³⁵ See p. 44, especially the extended discussion of Freydank 2009a.

least as likely that they were (nominally) independent agents, and perfectly possible that they also traded on behalf of the royal palace at Aššur. Certainly the state employed female textile workers on the *iškāru* work-assignment basis to make a range of textiles including military uniforms. Metal traders also did business for the palace, which supplied them with trading capital in kind (valued in lead), and expected them to give an account of how they had disposed of it on their return. Other merchants dealt in horses brought into Assyria from Nairi or elsewhere in the north for military use, whereas donkeys were acquired from transhumants in the western plains. Both paid customs dues when brought across the frontier into Assyria.³⁶

The provincial governments no doubt replicated the practices of the central administration at Aššur. A steward (AGRIG) was probably responsible for securing the raw materials and commissioning craftsmen to supply equipment needed for both military and agricultural purposes; the wide range of the steward's duties will no doubt emerge from the complete Tell Sabi Abyad Archive where we know of three stewards active in succession.³⁷ The administration supplied barley rations to horses involved in the military service (*ilku*) programme, and saw to the manufacture or repair of weapons (especially bows and arrows) and chariots. As already mentioned its cattle herds supplied traction for ploughing (probably including seeder ploughs) and threshing, and carpenters were needed to maintain the threshing sledges and doubtless also the yokes for the cattle. The cattle must also have provided essential leather, some of which would have been used in the chariots.

Associated with the presence of an Assyrian provincial administration we would therefore expect to see workshops and residences (for textile workers, some at least women, and wood, leather and metal workers), plus storage capacity for equipment and raw materials (wood, wool) and for grain and other foodstuffs. At Aššur, the main granary area was inside the city wall on the western side of the city (cf. Llop 2005a), while at Durkatlimmu it is perhaps a little surprising to find a granary in the basement of the very building in which the archives had been stored, right up on the acropolis. Other foodstuffs may also have been stored within the confines of the provincial palaces. Although only a single sesame seed was recovered from the Durkatlimmu granary, six were identified from Tell Sabi Abyad.³⁸ As far as I am aware, we do not yet have in Assyria any archaeological examples of a textile workshop, or sets of loom weights at this date, though they are not uncommon on contemporary settlements elsewhere.³⁹

At Tell Chuera there is the best evidence for a cadre of Assyrian residents brought into the city as part of the annexation process. Some if not all of these were provided with land, perhaps explicitly prebend land for which there is evidence in the Urad-Šerua Archive, and at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, and it is not unexpected that some of them were also given houses or house plots (see p. 255 No. 72). Most of the officials were presumably broadly "Assyrian", but

³⁶ For all these trading activities see the admirable study of Faist 2001.

³⁷ See Wiggermann 2000.

³⁸ See Van Zeist 1999/2000, 124.

³⁹ For a first-millennium find of loom weights in Assyria see Khirbet Hatuniyeh (Curtis & Green 1997).

at Harbu a number of Elamite families were brought in and allocated land. Further west, at Tell Sabi Abyad within the personal fiefdom of Ili-pada, much of the cultivation was carried out by local or transplanted subject populations (termed *šiluḫlu*),⁴⁰ and this too seems to constitute part of a deliberate campaign of resettlement, as early as the 13th century, foreshadowing other occasions when the central government rolled out a programme of rural renewal, specifying the provision of ploughs, grain storage and draft animals (p. 10) and the implantation of new palaces across the land. In stable political situations the agronomic regime can be extended further south beyond the limits of reliable rainfall agriculture because in drought years the marginal villages can rely on support from those in higher rainfall zones, and the resettlement of marginal lands in the jezirah is well attested from regional archaeological surveys about half a millennium later.

In light of all this, there are obvious ways the Assyrian presence may have had a visible impact on a local material culture, from the palace buildings down. We can expect new building, both regular and probably rudimentary housing as residences for an imported labour force, skilled and unskilled, and more specialist structures housing the government's own productive activities and their craftsmen; note also the occasional mention of the workhouse, or perhaps simply prison (*bēt nupāri*).⁴¹ Whether accommodation for new cultivators (of whatever social status) would have been found in existing townships or villages, or there was a policy of founding new villages, as happened in the 8th century, is something our written sources do not reveal, and current regional survey data are not adequate to address. The repertoire of household goods will have varied with the social status and ethnic origins of each family. The choice of crops may also have been dictated by cultural preferences, for example for sesame oil or beer, if not directly by the demands of the Aššur Temple offerings regime, so that shifts could be expected in the archaeobotanical record. It might also in theory betray the import of exotic spices and aromatics, though the honey mentioned in one Sabi Abyad text is unlikely to have left any archaeological trace. Likewise special emphasis on breeding sheep for wool and the military requirement for chariot horses may have had an impact on the zoo-archaeological evidence. The preference of the Assyrians for their own fairly standardised ceramics, recognisable across the state from east of the Tigris to Ili-pada's farmstead on the Baliḫ, has been painstakingly documented and discussed by Pfälzner and Duistermaat.⁴²

Two major questions hang over the agricultural activity which is so clearly illustrated in texts from Durkatlimmu, Harbu and Aššur itself. One is to what extent this is the palace putting in place new business enterprises in the territories which have become accessible to it, rather than taking over as state property some pre-existing agricultural regime. On balance one has to say that the evidence we have makes it look like a set of fresh enterprises, and the same could well apply to the stock-breeding regime we see at Durkatlimmu and Tell

⁴⁰ Wiggermann 2000, 185–9.

⁴¹ On which see Freydank 2006.

⁴² Pfälzner 1995; Duistermaat 2008; cf. my comment on Duistermaat (2008, 470): “it is through the establishment of such a ‘production organization’ that the pottery itself correlates with the presence of the Assyrian administration” (Postgate 2010, 29).

Ali. The central administration appears to be moving into these places with its own agenda, and this affects the second question, which is how the Assyrian regime interacted with the pre-existing rural population. It is clear that prebend lands in the northern provinces (and doubtless elsewhere) were given out to state servants, very likely with sitting tenants, who may or may not have been considered *šiluḫlu*, a term which I broadly understand to mean “dependent worker”. In the 14th century, Aššur families were already buying up farms on the Wadi Tharthar, and Urad-Šerua’s Archive shows that the urban elite might own a range of rural properties, very likely with the previous owners retained as sitting tenants. As already mentioned, what never appears is any sign of state taxation of agricultural output. The Neo-Assyrian agricultural taxes on grain and straw, called *šibšu* and *nusāḫē*, are not found in the Middle Assyrian texts to date, and the only state exactions mentioned in the Middle Assyrian sources seem to be the customs dues (*miksu*), which were very properly collected by a tax collector (*mākisu*).⁴³ If there was a nationwide tax on grain (and straw) the obvious person to collect this would be the village inspector (*rab ālāni*), who would presumably have operated under the supervision of the provincial governor.⁴⁴ But if he did, why do we have no documentary evidence for it?

In its engagement with agriculture, stock breeding and commerce, one could still characterise the state enterprise as an inflated version of a private household, and compare the entrepreneurial activities of the Late Old Babylonian palace, specialising in cattle and sesame.⁴⁵ There is one arm of the state, however, which is rather different, and that is the army. It is unfortunately poorly attested. The majority of texts relating to the army came from unspecified contexts in Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta, and some of the most informative were written not for the benefit of the army itself, but to account for the expenditure of grain from the state’s stores. At Tell al-Rimah and at Aššur there are occasional documents which show that military service was a quantifiable commodity, and that a system was in place for the provision of military supplies and equipment (chariots, spears) to men performing *ilku* service. What we almost completely lack is any documentation which comes directly from the administrators of the army itself. It is obvious that as at Alalah and Nuzi the central administration must have kept records of those members of the male population who had an obligation to serve in the army, whether as foot soldiers or, among the wealthier classes, as chariot riders. At both those cities there is copious documentation listing the names of different military classes,

⁴³ The only term I am aware of which might refer to a tax or impost is the word *endātu*, which seems to be the plural of a word *e/imittu* (from *emādu* “to impose”). However, it is only known to me from two documents from the Offerings Archive, where it seems to be referring to the fixed offerings system (MARV 8.59:6 a *sūtu ša endāt[e]* “*sūtu*-measure for imposts” and *endātu ša lime* PN “of the eponymate of PN”; and MARV 9.112:7 grain in the hands of boatmen *ša en-da-te la na-šu* “who have not brought the imposts”). For a possible obligation to the palace in grain at Šibaniba, see the term *mulāu* “complementary payment” in text No. 30 from Tell Billa (p. 273).

⁴⁴ I have only spotted two Middle Assyrian occurrences of the profession *mušarkisu*, which in Neo-Assyrian times has a rather ill-defined relationship with army recruitment. One is in MARV 10.28 which has to do with the delivery of skins to the army (*ana ešarte [...]* “to the decury [...]”), but the text is damaged and his role in the transaction is not clear. The other is MARV 10.70, presumably the sealed inner tablet of an envelope with the comment: “Mušallim-A[ššur], the *mušark[isu]*, encased (*iktašar*)”, which sheds no light on his function.

⁴⁵ See Charpin 1982.

but we have virtually nothing of the kind from Assyria. As already mentioned, one explanation for this must be the writing-boards listing men assigned either to the king himself, or to one of four highly placed officials. These we know existed, but they are lost to us, and it is still surprising that we have so few clay tablets with similar or related information. A few of the tablets from the governors' archives at Tell Billa are concerned with men in army service (e.g. p. 276), and Bi 48 suggests that the village inspector had a role to play in the process of conscription. It must remain a distinct possibility that the army authorities themselves operated more or less orally, without scribes or tablets; but it is certainly not a safe conclusion, because we may simply be lacking the right archives. Among the personnel involved in the construction of Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta MARV 2.17 (one of the barley accounts) lists 40 scribes in the charge of the Governor of the Land and 22 scribes in the charge of the steward, and although this was civil engineering, there are plenty of soldiers involved in the project as well as civilians.

Of course the Assyrian administration was not created in a vacuum, and when it moved into new territories it may have found existing systems in place. Its style of government surely owes something to its commercial past and perhaps to contemporary practice in Babylonia from where some of their scribes came (see Chapter 9), but it may also be instructive to compare neighbouring states which had likewise spent time under the overlordship of the Mittanian dynasty.

Introduction

If we seek to position the Middle Assyrian state bureaucracy in relation to other state administrations of the time, the first port of call has to be Nuzi.¹ This town, only some 90 km distant from Aššur across the Tigris and south of the Lower Zab (see map, Figure 2.1, p. 31), was in the 15th and 14th centuries one of the principal towns of the kingdom of Arrapḫe, itself a client of the kingdom of Mittani with its capital at Waššukanni far to the north-west on the upper Ḫabur. Although it is not mentioned in the Assyrian texts we have recovered so far, the evidence of the documents from Nuzi itself makes it clear that the city fell prey to the expanding ambitions of the Assyrian state, almost surely under Aššur-uballit at the end of the 14th century, around 1325 BC, after which point the written record ceases and it seems much of the town was abandoned.² The cuneiform tablets recovered from the deserted buildings include lists of charioteers from Ḫanigalbat and records of carnage and plunder in different parts of the Arrapḫan kingdom, some at least of which can confidently be attributed to the hostile activities of Assyrian armies.³

Nuzi boasted a palace, as the texts and the archaeology inform us, and it had a resident queen to testify to its relative importance within the kingdom of Arrapḫe.⁴ Frequent references in the texts found at Nuzi show that the city maintained close economic and social relations with numerous other settlements dotted across the countryside south of the Lower Zab and east of the Tigris. These are classed either as “towns” (*ālu*/URU) or as “farmsteads” (*dimtu*/AN.ZA.GĀR). The farmsteads are strikingly similar to the contemporary Assyrian *dunnu*. One of them must be represented by the site of Tell al-Faḥḥar, some 30–35 kilometres west of Nuzi (see Figure 7.1),⁵ which was excavated by an Iraqi expedition in the 1960s and belonged in the orbit of the town of Kurruḫanni.⁶ Here a massively constructed, perhaps

¹ I would like to reiterate here my gratitude to Dr Brigitte Lion for her generosity with her time and expertise in reading the first two drafts of this chapter and contributing substantial improvements, including corrections of fact and updated bibliographical references, not all of which are explicitly acknowledged.

² For the date of the end of the Nuzi archives see Stein 1989. Nuzi's complete absence from the 13th-century Assyrian textual corpus tends to confirm the impression that at that time the town was virtually abandoned.

³ The dossier relating to Assyrian hostilities is described and translated in Maidman 2010.

⁴ For the several “queens” in the kingdom see for example Cassin 1958, 24 and Morrison 1979, 15¹¹⁵.

⁵ The site is described as 35 kilometres south-west of Nuzi (Al-Khalesi 1977, 2), and as 45 kilometres south-west of Kerkuk (Wilhelm 1980–3, 371 and Fincke 1993, 159), distances which are not compatible if both are “as the crow flies”. Müller now gives grounds for locating the tell about 20 kilometres north of its earlier position on maps, bringing it more or less due west of Kerkuk, about halfway to Tell Ali = (N)atmanu (2009, 327).

⁶ Tell al-Faḥḥar has usually been identified with the town of Kurruḫanni (e.g. Wilhelm 1980–3, 371–2), which features frequently in its tablets, but Kolinski (2001), supported by Müller (2009), presents good arguments for seeing the site as a *dimtu* in its vicinity rather than the town itself.

even fortified, building yielded upwards of 600 cuneiform tablets, and their great similarity to the Nuzi archives, underlined by prosopographical links, makes it clear that such settlements shared a political and cultural unity with Nuzi and with the capital city at Arrapḫe, usually called the “City of the Gods”.⁷ Arrapḫe, only some 17 km north-east of Nuzi, and now the impressive ancient tell on which the citadel of Kerkuk stands, was the principal seat of a dynasty of local rulers owing allegiance to the Mittanian high king. The palace here will be buried deep beneath the modern city, but during the early 20th century AD a family archive was eroding out of rooms which must have stood near the edge of the mound in the 14th century BC, and the 139 tablets from here which ended up either in the Iraq Museum or scattered among other museums across the world have been reconstituted into the “Archive of the Wullu family”.⁸

The Nuzi Tablets

The town of Nuzi was excavated in the 1920s by an American expedition, and a fine report on the work was published in Starr 1937–9.⁹ Extensive excavation took place both on the main mound, which measures some 200 metres in each direction, and on subsidiary mounds in the flat land to the north, which proved to represent residential buildings founded on virgin soil, contemporary with Stratum II on the main mound. One of the principal achievements of the expedition was the recovery of more than 5000 cuneiform tablets, and the value of this haul of inscribed material was much enhanced by the fact that it came from controlled archaeological provenances. Tablets were widely distributed throughout, both in the five outlying private houses and in the residential houses and public buildings (palace and temple) in the main city, so that the majority of the tablets can be assigned to the room and the building in which they were left at the time the town was abandoned.

As at Aššur, tablets at Nuzi were sometimes stored in jars (e.g. Starr 1937–9, 339); clay bins in the corridor A11/13 may have served for the storage of tablets and certain rooms have been identified as archive rooms.¹⁰ The sheer number of tablets recovered, combined with the idiosyncratic nature of the language and script, which are Babylonian heavily influenced by the Hurrian language of the local population, has meant that as the publication of the tablets has gradually proceeded “Nuzology” has become a separate branch of Mesopotamian studies

⁷ The majority of the Tell al-Fahḫar texts still await formal publication. A selection was edited in A. Fadhil’s Heidelberg *Magister-Arbeit* (1972). A few are also published in Ismail & Müller 1977, Al-Rawi 1980 and Fadhil 1981 and have been cited elsewhere, for example in Fadhil 1983 (see pp. 353–4) and Müller 1995. A list of the tablets is given by Kolinski in SCCNH 12, 3–29 and SCCNH 15, 195–8.

⁸ Grosz examines details of what is known of the provenance and of the texts composing the archive (1988, 9–16). The seals on the Wullu archive tablets in Yale are published in Stein 1987.

⁹ A very useful summary of the history of the excavation is offered by Stein (1993, 13–15).

¹⁰ See Stein on Rooms A23 and A26, both with door sockets indicating that the rooms could be closed off (1993, 24). Copper nails found in A26 may come from boxes or shelves used for tablet storage; Stein suggests that they may have derived from a chest containing important documents relating to the family of Šilwa-Teššup (2010, 358).

pursued by an active group of specialists.¹¹ The Nuzi tablets outnumber the entire corpus of non-literary texts from all Middle Assyrian sites. Although many are still unpublished or only available as cuneiform copies, a few of the archives from different households are now accessible in comprehensive text editions. On the other hand, texts from the palace or identifiably state archives are relatively scarce, and have not yet been systematically edited. At Nuzi therefore we have rather the reverse of the situation in Assyria: there are more private than government archives and the documents from the private sector greatly outnumber those from the state sector. Because of this, the role of the written document in the world of Nuzi is most easily approached via the private sector, on which modern scholarship has hitherto concentrated.¹²

The Context: Arraphan Society and Economy

Before surveying the role of written documents at Nuzi, we need to set the scene with a lightning sketch of the salient characteristics of the society and economy as they are reflected in the texts. The town of Nuzi lay fairly centrally within the “Land of Arraphē”: at times at least the Lower Zab probably formed the north-western border of the territory, with towns like Natmanu and Turša(n) as frontier towns on its left bank, and towards the south-west the high barren ridge of the Jebel Hamrin no doubt formed a natural boundary.

It is more difficult to define limits towards the north-east, in the foothills of the Zagros, and towards the south-east, where the political reach of the Kassite dynasty in Babylonia may well have oscillated. Nevertheless, it seems likely that the territory of Arraphē, as reflected in the geographical range of the Nuzi texts, formed a block of land measuring no more than 100 by 100 kilometres, very much smaller than the territories controlled from Aššur during the 13th century (see Figure 7.1). Within these limits the land must have been densely settled: the texts from Nuzi regularly distinguish between towns (usually written URU, Akkadian *ālu*) and smaller settlements called *dimtu*, a word meaning “tower” and usually written with the Sumerogram AN.ZA.GÀR.¹³ Those settlements called *ālu* enjoyed a definite status and self-conscious municipal character. In the edict HSS 15.1 it is clear that each township was

¹¹ A comprehensive bibliography of “Nuzi studies” up to the year 1972 was given by Dietrich et al., 1972, updated to 1983 in Fadhl 1983, 346–50. The series *Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians* begun in 1981 and currently on Volume 19 has acted as a principal forum for publication on Nuzi for the last three decades. A newer list of text editions is given by Negri Scafa 1999, 74–80. See also <http://cluster13.ens-lsh.fr/spip.php?article80>: Un répertoire des publications de textes de Nuzi et Tell-al-Fahjar. It is symptomatic of Nuzi studies that several important contributions remain formally unpublished as German Magisterarbeiten or doctoral dissertations from North American universities.

¹² In Pedersén, the separate archives are assigned to their archaeological provenance, and a detailed account is presented of the groups of tablets according to their various find spots, together with their modern editions where they exist (1998, 19–28). Lion 1999a gives a Nuzi specialist’s overview of the different archives and their contexts, with more detail and commentary. For the texts he translates, a useful summary of find spots with their associated archives is also offered by Maidman 2010, 13–14.

¹³ Nuzi texts do not seem to use the Akkadian word *kapru* for a village, except as a proper name, and some of the settlements given the logogram URU which corresponds to *ālu* may well have been village-sized.

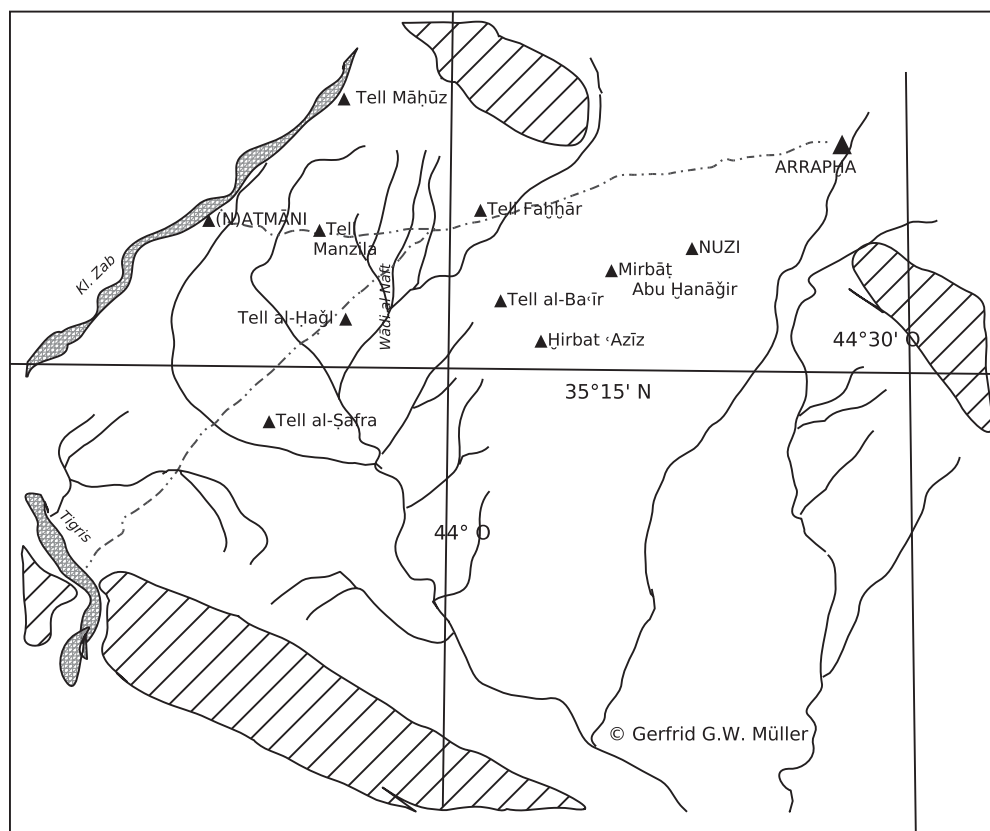


Figure 7.1. Map of the kingdom of Arrapḫe. © G. G. W. Müller.

headed by a mayor (*ḥazannu*) held responsible for events in the territory claimed by the settlement. The precise connotations of the term *dimtu* have been much discussed: it evidently refers to a farmstead, but at times it also refers to the territory associated with a farmstead (and of course may also include its inhabitants). The same edict makes it likely that townships and their mayors were held responsible by the state for any *dimtu* in their districts.¹⁴

One of the most striking features emerging from the Nuzi corpus is the density and frequency of these towns and farmsteads and the evidence for intense social interaction across the “Land of Arrapḫe”.¹⁵ Both types of settlement are mentioned in the texts in large numbers: Zaccagnini is able to list 39 towns large enough to have a road identified by reference to them (1979, 53), Fadhil investigates 50 selected towns (1983), and we know of more than

¹⁴ The distinction usually observed between these two types of settlement is well reported in Kolinski 2001.

¹⁵ For the “Land of Arrapḫe” cf. Fincke 1993, 35–7: that it has a specific political and hence juridical existence follows from the concept of the “son of the Land of Arrapḫe”, implying some form of citizenship status, which occurs in legal documents, e.g. Yale 12 Grosz 1988, 56 (restored); “daughter of Arrapḫe” Gadd 12 (Grosz 1988, 54). The index to Müller 1994 listing persons mentioned in the Nuzi tablets but engaged in transactions outside Nuzi runs to 45 pages. J. Justel notes that the “sons of the land of Arrapḫe” are frequently mentioned in adoptions of women, some of them stating that the adopted woman has to be married to a “son of the land of Arrapḫe”: see EN 9/3, 299; HSS 19.70; HSS 19.92 Y 22 (*tuppi martūti*); HSS 19.87 (*tuppi martūti u kallūti*).

200 separate farmsteads (Kolinski 2001, 151–4). Towns cannot have been more than a day's journey from their nearest neighbours, which has obvious implications for the system of communication across the territory. In addition to Arraphē and Nuzi, palaces are mentioned in at least eight towns (Cassin 1974, 389), including Turša(n) on the Lower Zab and, towards the southern limit of the territory, at Lubdi. The principal royal household (“the palace”) owned fields across the country, as did the queens, including Amminaya who was based at Nuzi.¹⁶ The king's son Šilwa-Teššup has households not only at Nuzi but also in Anzugalli, Al-ilani, Šilliawe, Tašeni and Zizza,¹⁷ while his sons Tatip-Tilla and Šilaḫi themselves have households at Šilliawe.¹⁸ The very extensive estates acquired by the Teḫip-Tilla family were located from north to south of the kingdom (see the map in Müller 1999a, 88). The Kiz-zuk family had estates in Purulliwe and “Temtenaš in the south and Šuriniwe in the north” (Müller 1999a, 87). In some cases an archive found at Nuzi nevertheless includes individual tablets which state that they were written elsewhere, for example in the archive of Pula-ḫali (or rather, of his son, Pašši-Tilla), which includes tablets written by scribes sitting “at the gate”¹⁹ of Arraphē, Ulamme and Tilla.²⁰ They were a family of merchants from a place named Tupšarriniwe, probably close to Kurruḫanni, as a document relating to their activities was also recovered at Tell al-Faḫḫar.²¹ Naturally individuals also found employment, whether voluntarily or compulsorily, around the kingdom, so at Natmanu we come across a range of people from different places (Fadhil 1983, 102–3). Individual government administrators might also be engaged in transactions in towns in different parts of the country, as illustrated by the grain distribution responsibilities of Šar-Teššup (Negri Scafa 2009a).

Although all the signs are that Arraphan society was geographically closely integrated, there were of course social and ethnic boundaries. Household slaves were frequently drawn from the mountains to the east, perhaps mainly from the Shahrizur plain, and were given the generic term *Nullu* or *Lullu* (see Fincke 1993, 190–3). There were probably Assyrian-speaking settlements in the western edges of the territory,²² while there is solid evidence in the Nuzi archives for well-established families with Kassite personal names. These included the Pula-ḫali merchant family, with its home base at Tupšarriniwe (“Scribeville”), where they held and acquired land,²³ although an archive of this family was recovered at Nuzi, and the family descended from Kizzuk which not only had a *dimtu* named after him, but also close connections with the towns of Temtenaš, Šuriniwe and Purulliwe, and must also have had a residence at Nuzi for several generations.²⁴ There were also families with pure Babylonian (as opposed to Kassite) names who supplied some of the scribes in the earliest attested

¹⁶ Müller 1999a, 87; for Amminaya see also Stein 1993, 27 and for her estates Kolinski 2001, 18. For Nuzi queens see also Lion 2008.

¹⁷ Morrison 1979, 13⁹²; in more detail Stein 1993, 30–1.

¹⁸ Morrison 1979, 8 and 13.

¹⁹ See Negri Scafa 1998 for gates.

²⁰ Lion 2001a, see Nos. 12–15.

²¹ See Lion 2001a, 12.

²² See Müller 1999a, 85.

²³ See Lion 2001a, 57–9.

²⁴ Dosch & Deller 1981; for the presence of Kassites cf. also Maidman 1984; Müller 1999a, 85–6.

generations at Nuzi.²⁵ Nevertheless, the majority of people named at Nuzi have linguistically Hurrian names, whether they were wealthy creditors or at the other end of the economic spectrum. Unlike in 13th-century Assyria, there does not seem to have been a substantial ethnically distinct population of dependent workers (*šiluhlu*),²⁶ but there are migrant workers of varied origins designated as *hāpiru*, and of course the occasional visiting foreign dignitary (*ubāru*) on diplomatic or military business, such as “the diplomats of the land of Aššur” (*ubārūti ša māt Aššur*).²⁷

To sustain the flourishing settlements of the land of Arrapḫe required an efficient agricultural regime. This was predominantly cereal cultivation, mostly dry farming, which must have become more difficult as one moved to the south and west away from the mountains. Around the major settlements, farmland was termed *ugāru*, referring to a communally administered (but privately owned) environment.²⁸ Irrigation was practised, presumably fed by offtakes from the left bank of the Lower Zab, but irrigated fields were in the minority: estimates range from 10 per cent to 20 per cent, although unsurprisingly perhaps, there is a higher percentage among the fields acquired by real estate adoption.²⁹ Beside barley, wheat and emmer, field crops included the summer sesame and millet, and a range of herbs and other food plants were grown in “gardens” (*kirū*) which may also have included fruit trees, though probably not dates, for which the region is too far north.³⁰ There were some “forests” (*qištu*/GIŠ.TIR), which will in part at least have been riverside thickets, yielding withies and timber, including the unidentified *šaššūgu*, while reeds, much in demand for arrow shafts among other purposes, may have come from river banks or marshy areas.³¹

The Scribes

The scribes of Nuzi have attracted much attention because in the absence of a regular dating system their family history has provided the nearest thing Nuzi has to an internal chronology. It is clear from their names that the principal scribal family of Apil-Sin and his descendants were of Babylonian origin.³² They were also probably independent agents, working alike for the state and for private individuals; unfortunately (as in Assyria) the majority of administrative documents do not mention the name of the scribe and it is difficult to establish whether individual scribes worked at the same time for the palace and in the private

²⁵ Negri Scafa 1999, 68.

²⁶ For a few Nuzi occurrences of this term see Fincke 1994 with discussion.

²⁷ For example Maidman 2010, Nos. 2 and 3 (HSS 14.48; 50).

²⁸ As in contemporary Assyria; see Zaccagnini 1979, 28–9.

²⁹ Müller 1999a, 88 (for these transactions see pp. 351–2).

³⁰ Though as Dr Lion points out to me Starr wrote that “Date stones in small numbers were found evenly distributed among the private houses” (1937–9, 493). Perhaps they were imported from further south.

³¹ See Zaccagnini 1979; also Müller 1999a.

³² For Apil-Sin’s family see Wilhelm 1970, 9–10. An Akkadian name is not a guarantee of a native Akkadian speaker, but for Purves’s identification of Apil-Sin and three other scribes as genuinely Babylonian see Negri Scafa 1999, 68.

sector.³³ However, scribes writing for the Šilwa-Teššup household did not receive rations like a majority of their direct employees, including merchants, and may therefore have remained independent. Many of the legal tablets from Nuzi end with a clause stating where the tablet was written: this is often at a city gate, sometimes of Nuzi itself, but also not infrequently at a different township. The city gate was a public space, with an associated official known as the *abultannu*, and some standard measures such as the “cubit of the city-gate” (*ammatu ša abulli*) were kept there (see Negri Scafa 1998, 140). At the capital Arrapḫe several of the city gates were frequented by the scribes, and they also worked at the gate of the palace (e.g. Grosz 1988, Gadd No. 1) and of certain cultic structures (Negri Scafa 1998, 144–6). Similarly scribes worked at all three gates in the town wall at Nuzi, as well as at the palace gate (Negri Scafa 1998, 152–9).³⁴ The documentation from Nuzi alone makes mention of a large number of scribes, and some of these are known to have been working at other certainly smaller settlements such as Tupšarriniwe (Lion 2001a, 64–7), and a place called Kipri, from where there came a group of private documents found in the temple.³⁵ It is clear that even quite small settlements must have had competent resident scribes, but also that some of the scribes moved around from place to place.³⁶ This will have been essential if all settlements were involved in the collective literate culture, to which the volume of documents from the probable *dimtu* at Tell al-Faḫḫar bears eloquent testimony.

Documents in Society

The private archives from Nuzi include two very large groups of tablets recovered from the outlying northern mounds and belonging to the households of high-ranking individuals. The texts from the mansion of Šilwa-Teššup, a son of the local king based at Arrapḫe, amount to 729 tablets, the majority of them quite late in the Nuzi sequence and deriving from the administration of the household and its various economic activities.³⁷ From the house of Tehip-Tilla came more than 1,000 tablets, predominantly legal deeds which go back to an earlier generation and document Tehip-Tilla's methodical accumulation of a real estate portfolio by the purchase of fields from many former owners. Alongside these two main groups were numerous smaller family archives of which the archive of Pula-ḫali (or rather Pašši-Tilla), edited in Lion (2001) with the seal impressions treated by Stein (2001), has received the most thorough edition and historical analysis.

³³ For four “palace slaves” acting as scribes and “clearly high-ranking officials”, one of whom “also practiced as a scribe in private matters”, see Negri Scafa 1999, 71–2.

³⁴ Of the eleven examples of tablets written at the palace gate listed by Negri Scafa, three were written by Arip-šarri, and she suggests that his activity here may reflect the fact that he is a “palace slave” (IR É.GAL) in HSS 14.593.

³⁵ B. Lion, pers. comm., referring to the five pages of scribes' names listed by D. I. Owen and P. Negri Scafa SCCNH 5, pp. 149–53. Her edition of the temple texts is in preparation.

³⁶ Negri Scafa 1992.

³⁷ For the architecture of this mansion, see Heinrich 1984, 87 Abb. 44.

Herding Contracts

One of the first private document types to be treated systematically as a group were the animal husbandry records discussed by Morrison. The great majority of these came from the archive of Šilwa-Teššup, but occasional examples from other contexts, including the palace, indicate that they may serve as typical.³⁸ Morrison distinguishes *memoranda*, recording “total numbers of sheep and goats counted and plucked or shorn”, and *ledgers*, which give “the names of herdsman associated with total numbers of livestock” (1981, 267). Both these she classifies as administrative texts; they are not dated or sealed, patronymics are not normally given³⁹ and they are plainly internal unilateral documents. However, the two best-defined text types are both bilateral documents, sealed by the herdsman accepting responsibility for the animals, whether cattle (Großvieh) or flocks (Kleinvieh) listed on the tablets. Under the procedure as set out by Morrison, each flock or herd would have been entrusted to the herdsman annually at or after the shearing (or rather plucking). A *consignment document* would be drawn up, in which the animals are listed by species, age and sex, totalled, and issued to PN, the herdsman, who sealed the tablet: “Total 52 sheep belonging to Šilwa-Teššup, given into the charge of Šekaya son of Urḫiya. (Seal)stone of Šekaya son of Urḫiya”.⁴⁰ As a rule these documents were not witnessed, but their lists (although also typically undated) provide the data for a bilaterally agreed statement from which the shepherd’s obligation in 12 months’ time would be calculated.

This subsequent stage is reflected in the other category of bilateral document, which set down in writing the outstanding liability or deficit of the herdsman in respect of the previous year.⁴¹ The animals the herdsman has failed to supply are again listed by age and sex, but as explained by Morrison (1981, 278–9), here there tends to be less detail of the lambs, since these are only notional numbers, but the youngest animals constitute a much higher proportion of the list than they do on the consignment lists, suggesting that the herdsman found it more difficult to match up to the birth rate requirements of the contract than to keep the losses of adult animals within the agreed limits. Sealed in the same way by the herdsman, but without witnesses, these *deficit documents* were no doubt retained by the owners along with the consignment document for the current year, and used to determine the herdsman’s total liability in due course. In some instances at least we learn that the herdsman “will bring them in at the plucking”.⁴² These two types of document closely resemble the system used by the Assyrian scribes at Durkatlimmu in the 13th century (see pp. 303ff.).

³⁸ Palace texts: HSS13.156 Eḫlip-Tilla; 493; JEN525 // 670 (Maidman 2008, 200ff. and 2010 No. 13); HSS14 554; 593 (3 shepherds among 83 “servants of the palace (LÜ.MEŠ IR.Ē.GAL)”; HSS 16.314; 316; 324; 325.

³⁹ as “usual in the administrative texts” (Morrison 1981, 263).

⁴⁰ ŠU.NÍGIN 52 UDU.ĪIA.MEŠ ša Šilwa-Teššup ana ŠU Šekaya DUMU Urḫiya nadnū NA₄ Šekaya DUMU Urḫiya.

⁴¹ These are called by Morrison “*muddû* texts”. The technical term for *deficit* in Nuzi Babylonian is *muṭṭû*, identical in origin and meaning with the contemporary Assyrian *muṭṭāu*, although unaccountably Nuzologists continue to normalise the word as *muddû* (cf. the prolonged discussion of this term in Ismail & Müller 1977–8, 30–4, which cites writings such as *mu-UD-TE-e*, which is even at Nuzi more easily taken as *mu-uṭ-ṭe₄-e* than *mu-ud-de₄-e* as they are obliged to transcribe to agree with their derivation from *madādu*); identity with *muṭṭāu* is virtually accepted, however, in Müller 1995, 42–3.

⁴² *i-na bu-qû-ni ú-še-ra-bá*, Morrison 1981, 268⁸³.

Morrison is able to show that some at least of the shepherds in Šilwa-Teššup's household drew rations for only about half the year, between November and May, presumably because they took the flocks to higher pastures during the summer months. They normally worked for a single owner, and indeed can be referred to as "PN₁, the shepherd of PN₂", and although some came from other towns, most were regular members of Nuzi society: "the facts that they are identified by patronymic, that they contract for their work, that they settle disputes with their employers in court, and that they provide specialized services distinguish them as free skilled professionals who worked willingly" (Morrison 1981, 261).

Land Transactions

The practices of animal husbandry and the agricultural products and processes were very much comparable to Assyria's, but the tenure of land was differently organised. A large proportion of the legal texts from Nuzi derive from a devious procedure of fictive adoption, recorded in the most idiosyncratic of all Nuzi document types, the "tablet of filiation" (*tuppi mārūti*). In these documents, in return for a "gift" (*qištu*) the current owner of land (or other real estate such as a building or threshing floor) formally adopts as his son the intending purchaser, thus enabling the new owner to "inherit" the property before the death of the original owner. The situation is so much taken for granted by the texts that we have no clear statements of the reasons for this elaborate procedure. Unlike at Aššur, there is no sign of the formal involvement of the state (in the person of the king) in the legal formulation of a new real estate title deed,⁴³ but judicial disputes indicate that the monarch did have a role to play in issues of land tenure. There is equally no sign that the existence of joint ownership rights by families or communities constrained sales. Most studies of the phenomenon have assumed that the initial entitlement to the relevant category of land was granted by the crown to a family head and his heirs, with no provision made for the title to be transferred to another person or family, and that making the new owner a member of the family was a way to circumvent this prohibition.

Explanations of the apparent embargo on a formal sale have often sought the reason in the state service obligation called *ilku*, which could be attached to real estate of all kinds, including houses and threshing floors, and was passed down within the family from father to son. It seems certain that at Nuzi *ilku* duties were owed to the king in Arrapḫe, and in Dosch's words, "Everything seems to indicate that the King of Arrapḫe gives out the *ilku*-land" (1993, 71). However, this does not apply to all land: while a high proportion of real estate adoptions referring to *ilku* also mention the palace, similar adoptions with no reference to *ilku* very rarely do so (Dosch 1993, 70). Therefore, while some texts do take care to specify that the original owners will continue to carry out the attached *ilku* duties, it may be wrong to assume that the liability for *ilku* is the sole cause of the fictive procedure.

In fact in earlier generations especially there are also tablets from both Nuzi and Tell al-Faḫḫar which record the purchase of land in more familiar straightforward terms, using

⁴³ Cf. Grosz 1988, 82: "the legal notion of a final, 'reinforced' document did not exist in Nuzi/Arrapḫe". For the Assyrian situation see p. 35.

the word *šimu* (cf. Negri Scafa 2005, 143; Maidman 2010 No. 84), either separately from or in connection with a fictive adoption, and a recent study by Fincke advocates a different explanation for the procedure, noting that there is evidence that the adopting (i.e. selling) family could remain in effective possession of the land, even though the nominal ownership changed hands, with both the old and the new owners benefitting annually from the produce from the land. This might have been more satisfactory for families in economic need than the land pledge scenario (in Nuzi, *tidennūtu*), where the indebted family lost possession of the land and thus of its productive capacity, and may mean that the scarcity of “normal” land sale texts is not because of a formal prohibition but because the adoption procedure was preferred with its advantages for both sides.

Another question still unresolved is what the performance of *ilku* duty entailed in theory or in practice: personal service for the state (or the palace), as is often assumed on the basis of the Akkadian terms *alāku* and *ilku* – but in military or civilian contexts? In Maidman’s recent summary of the situation (2010, 163–9) it is accepted that *ilku* would constitute an obligation to the state, and he notes that “the only specific descriptions of the *ilku* are agricultural labor for the government ... the manufacture of textiles ... and other non-military labor” (2010, 164). However, he himself notes here that a term for “obligatory military service” is “curiously lacking” in the Nuzi corpus, and it must remain at least a possibility that as in other times and places this form of state service sometimes involved military and sometimes civilian conscription without a hard and fast dividing line between.

Loan, Pledge and Family Law

The methodical documentation of land transactions is the clearest indicator of the importance attached to written deeds in Nuzi society, but other document types reinforce this. Land could also be leased or pledged to guarantee a loan, and the technical term for this is *tidennūtu*. This typical Nuzi term also covers a wide variety of transactions, including the pledge of persons, in particular an arrangement whereby the borrower undertakes to serve in person in the household of the creditor for an agreed number of years, his service functioning in place of interest on the loan.⁴⁴ In some cases this relationship will have ultimately resulted in the debt enslavement of the borrower, and slave sale documents also exist. There is also a range of documents from family law: as well as the fictive land transactions, there are real adoptions, in which an older man genuinely takes on a son and heir, as can be seen from the filial duties to which the adopted son commits himself. A variant on this, which reflects attitudes to the economic role of the family, is displayed by those cases when a man adopts another man to act as his son-in-law, thereby positioning his daughter in a patrilinear family and enabling her effectively to inherit the family property.⁴⁵ An example of this comes from Wullu’s archive at Arrapḫe, which also included yet another form of adoption, in which Wullu had been given a woman called Ašte “for daughterhood” (*ana martūti*) by

⁴⁴ For different kinds of antichretic loans cf. Maidman 2010, 213.

⁴⁵ See Grosz 1988, 44–5; Grosz 1989; Lion 2004.

her father, Mušteya, with the intention that he should marry her off to one of his sons or to someone else, keeping the bride price paid for her.⁴⁶ The tablet itself records that Mušteya's son Akkulenni had subsequently failed in an attempt to get the judges to reverse this because Wullu was able to produce witnesses to Mušteya's original statement. Also well represented are wills (*tuppi šimti*), which not only specify the goods inherited by the heirs but also their responsibilities, notably the duties of the senior heir to mourn and maintain the funerary cult of the deceased.

The courts at Nuzi seem to have been kept busy, to judge from the number of records of judgements that have come down to us, and the population resorted to legal action on fairly trivial issues. The king had an overriding responsibility for the processes of justice and could be involved at different stages in the process. Those in search of justice might appeal to him: "I have repeatedly sued him and I have supplicated the king, and they wrote to Hutip-apu the governor of the land".⁴⁷ He may instruct his officials at Arraphē – often those holding the office of *sukkallu* – to arrange proceedings, and may be required to deliver sentence after a river ordeal has identified a guilty party.⁴⁸ Judges may have been appointed by the king, but seem to be locally based, sometimes belonging to families who appear in other roles in the Nuzi archives. The records of court business were sealed by the judges and by one or both parties, and those we have come mostly from private archives where the successful litigants would have stowed them.⁴⁹ If the courts also retained dossiers of their decisions, we do not have these. We do also have a characteristic class of Nuzi document introduced by the sign EME (*lišānu*), meaning "tongue" or "statement", in which depositions by one or more parties and a result are recorded and sealed by witnesses (see Figure 7.2). These are found in the context of court judgements, although they also occur in a wide variety of other legal transactions including loan and sale texts.⁵⁰

Both court records and a variety of land transactions testify to the significance accorded to the written document by the courts.⁵¹ Thus we read in the judicial decision JEN 2.321 "Inasmuch as he ... read aloud before the judges the tablet of Hutip-apu, the regional governor, (that) 9 towns testified for Kel-tešup with respect (and that) the cylinder seals of the men from the (same) 9 towns and of Hutip-apu were rolled on the tablet ...".⁵² Similarly in a land dispute at the capital city of Arraphē we learn that "the judges heard the (original) tablet of

⁴⁶ See Gadd No. 35 in Grosz 1988, 48. On the adoption of women see also Grosz 1987.

⁴⁷ JEN 2.321: 7–9 *ana šarri uš-tu-lé-ḫi-in*, Maidman 2010 No. 61. Cf. JEN 325 (Dosch & Deller 1981, 95).

⁴⁸ So HSS 13.422 (Lion 2000, 152). For the involvement of the state's central authorities, who at least sometimes were the *sukkallu*, and ultimately of the king in person, see the letter JEN 4.325, edited most recently as Maidman 2010 No. 57. Malefactors are to be hauled before the king in AASOR 16 No. 76.

⁴⁹ Maidman is no doubt right that the documents we do have were drafted to confirm the rights of the successful litigant, but they would be sealed by judges and must have had the authority of the state behind them.

⁵⁰ Some examples cited in CAD L, 212. Nuzi court documents were discussed in the doctoral dissertation of R. E. Hayden on court procedure at Nuzu, Brandeis University, 1962. Other formal statements are introduced with *umma* "Thus saith". For *lišānu* declarations relating to loans see Lion 2001a, 18, 33–4, 45 and so forth., and for other types of text see the Cumulative Catalogue presented as Owen 1995.

⁵¹ Already on this point see Maidman 1979, 182–3; 2010, 209.

⁵² Translation of Maidman 2010, 141.



Figure 7.2. Declaration (EME=*lišānu*) concerning an orchard adoption (EN 9, 30 + NTF P 230(1) from Tulpunnaya Archive). Reverse, showing scribe's and witnesses' seals and captions. © Ph. Abrahami.

agreement stating that whoever breaks the agreement will pay 1 cow”.⁵³ While real estate was shared between heirs on the death of the father, the division can be described with reference to the title deeds: “Out of Našwe’s tablets Wanti-šenni took two tablets, Akawatil two tablets, Pui-tae two tablets, Šukri-tešup took two tablets. From this day we, the sons of Wullu have divided among ourselves”. No doubt these tablets from the grandfather of the four brothers recorded the details of the properties and made it unnecessary to prepare new deeds repeating the same information. At Nuzi in a legal statement we read “and now I have given those

⁵³ Grosz 1988, 89 Kelsey 2 (*tuppu ša tamgurti*).

houses with their tablets as a donation to Šilwa-Teššup, the son of the king” (Maidman 2010 No. 80: 12–16).⁵⁴ After recording that Tehip-apu has carried out the sale by adoption of a *dimtu* together with various facilities, and stating the fine for abrogating the deal, the scribe adds: “Thus Tehip-apu; I have also given to Eḫliya the tablet of that *dimtu*” (Maidman 2010 No. 81).

Commerce

Private commercial documents are in regular use.⁵⁵ Many of these can be viewed as genuine loans, made by a better-off creditor to a debtor in current need: this follows from the observation that not only were loans of grain normally for repayment “after the harvest”, but even advances of metal (principally tin but also copper or bronze) fell due in the summer months (Kurilli and Šehali, months iii–v), as exemplified in the archive of Pašši-Tilla.⁵⁶ Other contracts from the same archive show Pašši-Tilla using his capital resources to commission goods and services: thus he provides agents with the capital required to supply a product at a later date, such as a shekel of gold “for the purchase” (*ana šimi*) and supply of barley (Lion 2001a, 27–31), or for the provision of sheep (No. 37).⁵⁷ Also in this category are trading investments, for example Lion 2001a, no. 16, where six men receive a capital sum of 3 talents 52 minas of tin which are deposited “in a purse” (*i-na ki-si*), a term in widespread use already in Old Babylonian times for an investment (Lion 2001a, 32). Pašši-Tilla also provided capital in the form of tin to enable a certain Zunna to participate in a palace trading mission (*a-na KASKAL.ME ša e-kál-lim*, No. 12:7), in one instance specifically for the acquisition of horses (No. 13). Many of these tablets were in fact written at the town of Tupšarriniwe where the family belonged, and which seems to have been closely linked to Kurruḫanni. It is not known why the tablets which form this archive should have been stored at Nuzi. Zaccagnini observed that, unlike his father, Pašši-Tilla seems to have been involved in lending to merchants, but not in travelling on their trading ventures himself.

The activities of the merchant class best attested in our written sources are in foreign trade. Contracts drawn up with an investor record commodities or currency taken by a merchant, “as purchase material for” or “for the purchase of” specific commodities. The relationship between an investor and a merchant could be long term: we have a legal case where a creditor claims unpaid annual interest of 50 per cent on an initial investment dating back all of 15 years.⁵⁸ Trading commissions from the household of Šilwa-Teššup include a slave supplied for the acquisition of a horse or mare 4 or 5 years old (HSS 9.149=AdŠ 565), witnessed and

⁵⁴ B. Lion will shortly show that one of these tablets is actually known to us from Šilwa-Teššup’s archive and published as HSS 19, 35. There is plenty of evidence for the retention of previous title deeds by the new owners of real estate in the Old Babylonian documents.

⁵⁵ See Owen 1969 for loans of commodities; Eichler 1973; Zaccagnini 2001; 2002; Wilhelm 1992; Jordan 1990 on *tidennūtu*.

⁵⁶ See Lion 2001a, 34–5 for such transactions in this archive. There is a bias in this archive towards metal loans compared with, for example, loans in the Šilwa-Teššup archive, which has been attributed to their business mode.

⁵⁷ See Zaccagnini 1977b, 185 for the distinction between commercial debts and commissions.

⁵⁸ Maidman 1993, No. 5; cf. Lion 2000, 144.

sealed; for a similar procedure see HSS 9.36 (=AdŠ 566). The palace also engaged in similar transactions. So a woman worth 5 minas of copper was handed over to a merchant for the purchase of exotic items including spices and coloured wool and dyes (AASOR 16.77⁵⁹); or two cloths and two sets of cloaks belonging to the palace “for trading” (*ana tamkārūti*), in exchange for which the merchant Arrapḫa-atal is to supply a talent of myrtle (AASOR 16.78⁶⁰).

It is noticeable that whereas Pašši-Tilla seems normally to have provided trading capital in the form of one or more metals, merchants operating both for the palace and for Šilwa-Teššup might take their capital either as textiles or as a slave(woman), although to balance the items received by a merchant against the goods he brought back, their value was sometimes expressed in metal. This reflects the fact that as in earlier centuries in Mesopotamia, the role of a *tamkāru* could embrace not only the acquisition of exotic items required by his customers, such as horses or spices, but also the redistribution within the economy of commodities from the supplier to the consumer, receiving and retailing capital goods of which the customer wished to dispose.⁶¹ In the case of textiles in particular, we can see that the merchant class was therefore effectively the retail arm of a textile enterprise, finding a market for goods produced by the household or palace.

At the same time, the practice of supplying the merchant with capital in the shape of commodities, rather than a weight of metal acting effectively as currency, may reflect the fact that in the Nuzi economy more generally some modes of payment do retain symbolic value. Having observed that “in contrast with developed monetary economies ... many ancient / archaic / ‘primitive’ / ‘simple’, or whatever, societies do not make use of an ‘all-purpose money,’” Zaccagnini comments that “The Nuzi documents offer a paramount example of a segmented economy of this sort: even a cursive perusal of the textual data testifies to the high degree of ‘specialization’ of the various classes of goods, in their employ as standards of value and, above all, as means of payment” (1984, 143). In real estate adoptions (*tuppi mārūti*), for instance, the “gift” handed over by the adopted party (i.e. the purchaser) is not expressed as a weight of silver or copper, but as a range of different commodities, such as “1 set of ... wheels... 1 garment, 3 rams, and 3 ewes” (Maidman 2010, No. 67), “5 sheep, 5 goats, (and) 20 minas of tin” (Maidman 2010 No. 70) or, at Arrapḫe, “20 minas of copper (and) 4 sheep” (Gadd No. 44; Grosz 1988, 61), “30 minas of copper (and) 1 homer of grain” (Gadd No. 34, Grosz 1988, 69), or in an exchange of land (*šupe’ultu*) a package comprising “4 homers of grain, 40 minas of copper, 1 *zianatu* rug,⁶² (and) 2 *qû* of oil” (Gadd No. 40, Grosz 1988, 74). For a slave woman at Arrapḫe, the price was “1 4-year-old ox, 2 sheep, 1 cloak, 2 homers of grain, 3 shekels of silver, 1 mina 30 shekels of bronze, 6 minas of tin – these are the valuta (*annūtu* KÛ.BABBAR.MEŠ)” (Contenau 46, Grosz 1988, 117).

⁵⁹ Provenance not stated; unwitnessed, sealed only by “Ilu-ittiya, the merchant”.

⁶⁰ Room C89; unwitnessed, sealed only by “Arrapḫa-atal, the merchant”. Very similar HSS 15.262 (Lion & Sauvage 2005, 63).

⁶¹ For this dual role of the merchant in early southern Mesopotamia see Postgate 2003b.

⁶² Perhaps of felt: see Schneider-Ludorff 1998.

It is plain that payment in more than one commodity was expected, although in strictly economic terms it could have been made in a simpler form, because the cumulative value of the package was well understood. Thus in referring to an earlier land transaction a litigant states: “From the sons of Pula-ḫali I received 1 good 4-year-old cow, 10 good sheep, 26 minas of tin (and) 8 minas of bronze, these (as) silver/money (KÛ.BABBAR)” (Lion 2001a, 101 No. 10:19–25). Similarly a refund of an assemblage of items comprising donkeys and tin, which were given out on loan, may be simply referred to as “silver (*kaspu*)”. While *kaspu* here might imply little more than the total price expressed as an abstraction, in some texts the component parts are explicitly estimated in terms of silver: a future payment for a slave woman is to be composed of “5 sheep, 1 beast (either an ox or a good 4-year-old donkey), and [x] shekels of silver payable in whatever medium he wants: Totalling 20 shekels of silver”.⁶³ In marriage documents similar combinations are found making up the bride price: “bridewealth is reckoned in terms of silver, even though it is paid in specific commodities where livestock especially plays an important role” (Grosz 1988, 110). A recurring value for bride wealth in Nuzi texts is 40 shekels, or less often 30 shekels, of silver, and this may be explicitly stated, after an enumeration of the components of the package: thus in HSS 19.75 the initial payment is of 1 donkey, 2 sheep and 3 minas of tin, together valued at 15 shekels, followed by a further 15 shekels at a later stage.⁶⁴ Such transactions are doubly symbolic, in that the standardisation of the price implies that non-economic constraints are at work, and the package of commodities composing it also bears the stamp of social convention. Similarly, fines in legal documents are sometimes expressed as 1 mina of gold and 1 mina of silver, but for less serious contraventions there is a standard fine of “1 ox”.⁶⁵

The trading contracts from both Pašši-Tilla’s and Šilwa-Teššup’s archives are generally formalised bilateral documents, witnessed and sealed, but for similar transactions within the administration there is room for less formality. The examples from the palace are similar to other administrative tablets in which a member of the institution’s staff is accepting liability: they are sealed, and the sealing party is identified by caption, but witnesses are not listed nor do they apply their seals.⁶⁶ This strongly suggests that Zaccagnini was right to conclude that “the *tamkāru* was a subordinate member of palace personnel”, citing HSS 14.593, where three “merchants” (LÚ.MEŠ DAM.GÀR), like shepherds, are included in a list of 83 “palace servants” (LÚ.MEŠ ÌR É.GAL) receiving rations.⁶⁷ On the other hand,

⁶³ HSS 19.110, cf. Zaccagnini 1977b, 188; see Müller 1995, 375 for this passage, with the interpretation of *ḫašaḫušennu* as an Akkadian+Hurrian term meaning “payable in the form he wants” (“in beliebiger Form bezahlbar” on page 380.) Compare Zaccagnini 1981, 360: “TÜG in Nuzi thus represented a commodity of standard dimensions and weight. It was employed often as a means of payment”, also citing one passage where a list of commodities paid over in a *tidennūtu* transaction includes “1 textile instead of 5 shekels of silver” (JEN 297:20).

⁶⁴ See Grosz 1981, 175–8 with the individual texts summarised in Table 5. Dr Justel notes that this phenomenon is still clearer in HSS 19.83, and RATK 2 or IM 70970 (40 shekels silver), and well exemplified in the dossier HSS 5.79 + HSS 9.111 + HSS 5.13.

⁶⁵ For example Lion 2001a, No. 9 (EN 9/3, 230); EN 9/1.404:39 (SCCNH 2 p. 629) “1 good ox” (1 GU₄ SIG₅.GA); but in Lion 2001a, No. 8 (EN 9/2, 267) two oxen.

⁶⁶ See Zaccagnini 1977b, 179.

⁶⁷ Zaccagnini 1977b, 173; summarised in Zaccagnini 2002, 178.

this does not rule out the possibility that the same merchants might carry on business for other clients.⁶⁸

Although they relate to very similar transactions, the differences between the palace merchant commissions and those from the Šilwa-Teššup archive are not accidental. Šilwa-Teššup's residence at Nuzi is palatial,⁶⁹ and his household only private in a manner of speaking, but it was kept separate from the palace, and although the archives recovered from the house are predominantly administrative, rather than legal as in the case of Tehip-Tilla, they are concerned more or less exclusively with the administration of his own household and not with state affairs. Thus a great many of the texts are records of rations issued to the dependants of the household, who include not only labourers attached to it but also Šilwa-Teššup's immediate family, including his chief wife, as many as seven concubines (*esrēti*), his sons and perhaps his mother.⁷⁰

Documents in the State Sector

The Palace Archives

Similar ration lists from the palace indicate that although the king's principal residence was at Arrapḫe, he also maintained a household at Nuzi with a queen, concubines and musicians (see Lion 2008), but although he may occasionally have resided there, much of the documentation from the palace was to do with state administration rather than its internal affairs. The palace, which lay centrally on the mound, was made up of rooms arranged around at least two large courtyards (see [Figure 7.3](#)).⁷¹ Collections of tablets came from different parts of the complex, and are grouped by Pedersén into eight archives (1998, 17–20). There is at present no comprehensive edition of the approximately 600 tablets thought to have come from the palace, although overviews of the material were offered by Mayer and Pedersén among others, and plans for a Web-based resource are well advanced. Certain types or groups of tablets have been the subject of separate studies, often concentrating on specific topics such as military administration or bricks.⁷² It appears that for the most part the texts still stored in the palace at the time of its destruction were, as might be expected, from the state's administrative activities, and not the private legal documents preponderant, for instance, in the Tehip-Tilla archive.⁷³ Nevertheless, with the exception of the military documentation, the activities

⁶⁸ So Zaccagnini 1977b, 180–1; 2002, 178.

⁶⁹ Cf. the comments of Stein on the architecture of “House A” (1993, 24).

⁷⁰ For his family, see Morrison 1979.

⁷¹ From Starr 1937–9, Plan III; also reproduced by Pedersén (1998, 18); Heinrich 1984, Abb, 43.

⁷² The standard work on the military evidence from Nuzi remains the Brandeis PhD thesis of Timothy Kendall. Texts specifically recording suits of armour or their parts (coming largely from Room N120) are listed by him in Kendall 1981, 201¹. See also Negri Scafa 1995. On bricks cf. Mayer 1977; Zaccagnini 1981, 357–8; Lion & Sauvage 2005.

⁷³ The archives of Tulpunnaya were found in N120 at the eastern end of the palace, along with military documents, and are perhaps the only family archives from the complex identified as the palace. Why they were there is a question which cannot be definitively answered at present (cf. Lion 1999a, 49, citing Mayer 1978, 40–9; AASOR 16 Nos. 14–45; Lion 2001a). For the location of this room see for example Pedersén 1998, 18 (his archive Nuzi 1).

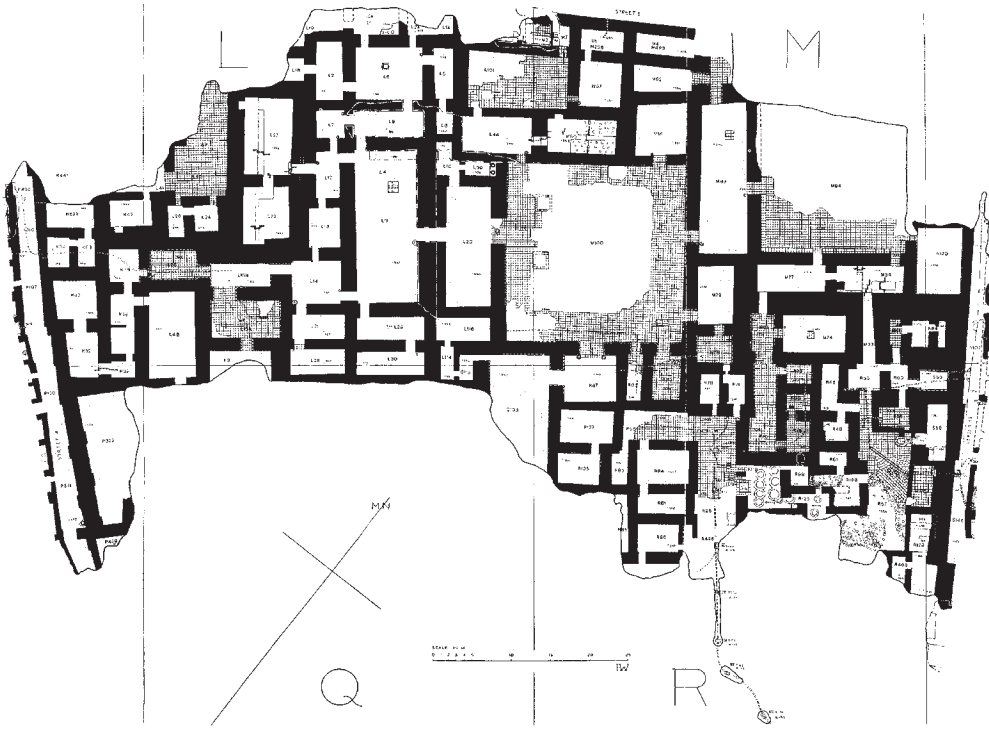


Figure 7.3. The Palace at Nuzi (after Starr 1937–39, Plan III). Courtesy of the Semitic Museum, Harvard University.

of the palace and the way they are documented very much resemble what was happening in the private households. This does not, however, mean that the parties involved and the scribes were incapable of differentiating state business from their private transactions. Just as in Assyria, the palace is referred to almost as a persona in its own right, and Nuzi texts also make use of the phrase “in the hand of” or “in the charge of” (*ša/ina ŠU*) where a person is responsible for, but not the owner of, a commodity.⁷⁴

Commodity Movements

Commodity transactions in the palace fall into two main categories, receipts and issues, and in the nature of things items received will in due course be issued. Edible items would have been distributed as rations to the palace’s dependants, who were many and varied: “scribes, cultic personnel, male and female singers (usually coming from Aššur or Ḫanigalbat), messengers, physicians, millers, brewers, bakers, cooks, potters, wood and metal workers, leather workers, smiths, bowmakers, gardeners, fishermen and poultry breeders or fowlers, male and female weavers and spinners, carpet manufacturers, heralds, manufacturers of ointment,

⁷⁴ Cf. the comments of Stein (1993, 41–2).

barbers, nurses, fullers, preparers of oil, and a number of Hurrian professional names not yet translated”.⁷⁵ One of the palace households had as many as 224 personnel.⁷⁶

The palace also required raw materials from which to produce a range of manufactured products, and the specialised work of supply and subsequently manufacture may partly have been carried out by craftsmen or other specialised workers who were not permanent members of the personnel. In some, if not all, such cases the production was administered through the work-assignment (*iškāru*) system already described in Assyria. Raw materials such as wood from the forest workers (HSS 13.110:1–6), or spices from the gardeners (HSS 14.239=601), are delivered to the palace as their work-assignments, but the palace also receives finished products designated *iškāru*, such as arrows from a bow maker (*sassinu*; HSS 14.226:1–3) or chariots or parts of chariots from those who make them, and wooden artefacts and baskets from the forest wardens (HSS 13.315).⁷⁷ Also classed as *iškāru* are raw materials issued by the palace to the craftsmen, such as oil to textile workers (HSS 13.198:11–12) or wool, oil and leather to someone making a chariot (on different tablets). Dosch considered that some of these documents “seem to imply some form of contracted labor” (1987, 232), citing HSS 15.299, which “records disbursement of metals from the palace depot or from a private person to a metal worker to make definite objects or utensils out of them, with the explicit order to return the fabricated objects”.⁷⁸ Such texts are not witnessed, but may be sealed: thus HSS 15.208, which lists wool and skins issued as his *iškāru* to the helmet manufacturer Ḫutip-Tilla, is sealed by him to acknowledge receipt.⁷⁹ In another economic sphere we find an *iškāru* may be attached to fields, perhaps where a duty to harvest has been imposed on certain persons, or state land is entrusted to someone for cultivation.⁸⁰ Texts from Tell al-Faḥḥar attest to individual farmers supplying a proportion of their crop to the palace.⁸¹

Apart from rations to its immediate dependants and work materials for those it employed, the palace occasionally loaned commodities to private individuals or for private purposes, but this seems to have been relatively rare: “Les prêts de céréales ou de métaux, fréquents dans les archives privées, ne font pas partie des activités du palais”.⁸² There are however a number of “brick loans”. These record that the palace loaned hundreds or thousands of bricks to persons who undertook to repay the same number after the harvest (which would coincide with the time of year when straw and labour were available for the manufacture of new bricks). These are bilateral documents, and the eight texts listed by Lion and Sauvage recording loans from the palace all use the term *ḫubullû* “loan”, while the borrower(s) seal(s) the tablet (2005,

⁷⁵ Quotation from Dosch 1987, 231, based on Mayer 1978. The singers may not actually have come from Aššur and Ḫanigalbat, but rather have been specialists in the two musical traditions (see Lion 2008).

⁷⁶ Dosch 1987, 231; and HSS 13.30 lists 240 palace staff comprising 160 women plus 80 men and children.

⁷⁷ Or wooden agricultural implements (HSS 13.101, see Schneider-Ludorff 2002, 129).

⁷⁸ On metal workers and associated *iškāru* arrangements see now also Negri Scafa 1995; Schneider-Ludorff 2009, 526–9.

⁷⁹ Kendall 1981, 211, also on HSS 15.196.

⁸⁰ Cf. Grosz 1988, 116 BM 120109, an unsealed document probably from a private archive at Arraphē, or Kolinski 2001, 121 on HSS 13.300 and 13.212 (now edited Dosch 2009, No. 32a, and No. 30=Maidman 2010 No. 94 respectively), where the *iškāru* is explicitly associated with harvesting.

⁸¹ Müller 1995.

⁸² Lion & Sauvage 2005, 68; cf. Zaccagnini 2002, 177.

64–5), but they are not witnessed, suggesting that the borrowers had a close relationship with the palace, and indeed one of them, Naniya son of Kip-ukur, is known elsewhere as a merchant working for the palace (2005, 65).⁸³ Lion and Sauvage have noted two similar loans made by the major domo (*šakin bīti*) Erwi-šarri, no doubt on behalf of the palace. One (HSS 14.196, Room M79) is for malt, another (HSS 14.220=626, Room R76) for reed arrow shafts: in each case the borrower seals the tablet and neither has a repayment clause or witnesses. Comparable too are a few texts which do not use the word loan (*hubullû*), recording issues of various items by the palace to individuals with similar but not identical phrasing: the recipient “received from the palace and will return it”, or “received X belonging to the palace and will return it” or “received from Nuzi and will return (it) to the palace” (Lion & Sauvage 2005, 69–70). These tablets too are sealed by the recipient but unwitnessed.

State Administration outside the Palace

In what seemed to be a private house on the main mound, lying to the north-west of the palace, were documents from the family of Zike with his son Artimi and grandson Šar-Teššup (Pedersén's Archive No. 11: House 31⁸⁴). Negri Scafa comments: “Although documents connected to palace administration found in private houses are not very common, they are not an unusual find at Nuzi”, and in the case of this house they are “in the majority” (2009a, 437–8). The main archive came from two rooms in the sector north of the temple in particular (C19 and C28), and they fell broadly into two categories, legal documents, discussed at length in Negri Scafa 2005, and administrative texts, addressed in Negri Scafa 2009a. Šar-Teššup, the person mostly involved here, belonged to the third generation of the family known to us, and hence late in the Nuzi time span.⁸⁵ He was a chariot rider, and also at times bore the titles *emantuhlu* and *atuhlu*, which can be quite high in the military hierarchy.⁸⁶ It emerges that he was much engaged in the administration of the army, in particular in the provision and distribution of barley not only at Nuzi but at widely separated places within the kingdom of Arrapḫe. This activity seems to fall under the immediate control of the *šakin māti*, the “governor of the land” who is encountered as the senior administrator in the palace at Nuzi.⁸⁷

It is apparent, that as with the family of Urad-Šerua at Aššur (Chapter 4.5), the family's private legal documents were stored in the same house as a collection of texts which relate to its activities as state officials. This suggests, without proving it, that one or more members of the family held a state office but actually carried out its duties from their own premises. In support of this we may note that not only the documentation but also commodities belonging to

⁸³ Commissions for the manufacture of bricks are known from private archives, and these are much more elaborately formulated with details of the wages paid, and penalties payable in sheep for non-delivery, with a number of witnesses (Lion & Sauvage 2005, 81–4).

⁸⁴ Pedersén 1998, 20–2; his “House 31” is “Group 31” in the excavators' terminology, used by Negri Scafa 2005; cf. Lion 1999, 52; Negri Scafa 2009a.

⁸⁵ Though his activity does not all belong in the final days at Nuzi (Negri Scafa 2009a, 475).

⁸⁶ See for instance Kendall 1974, 99ff. for *emantuhlu*.

⁸⁷ Kolinski 2001, 13; Negri Scafa 2009a, 476. For the occurrence of private texts in the palace, and vice versa, cf. Lion 1999a, 62.

the state could be stored in the private residences: this at least seems to follow for amounts of barley recorded in the archive from the House of Zike, son of Artirwi. Negri Scafa comments that “these houses may have been part of a network of peripheral warehouses that were managed ‘on paper’ by the palace, being freed in this way of the need to store and transport the barley” (2009a, 472–3). This is reminiscent of the situation encountered at the rural centre of Duara under the control of the Assyrian provincial governor of Durkatlimmu, where at least two houses named after individuals are mentioned as storage locations for the palace crops (see p. 318).

The mixture of state records with private archives is not confined to the transport or storage of grain but also extends to other aspects of military administration. Tablets recovered from Rooms 11–12 in the House of Šurki-Tilla, located off the main mound, included at least two texts listing charioteers or soldiers, and a comparable situation may be reflected in the case of Room A34, in the House of Zike, son of Akkuya, directly adjacent to Šilwa-Teššup’s mansion in the north-eastern suburbs, where numerous lists of chariot riders were found (Dosch 1976; Pedersén 1998; Lion 1999, 48; Dosch 2009).⁸⁸

Documentary Format

Evidence for scribal training at Nuzi does not come from the palace but only from houses in the south-west sector,⁸⁹ yet the close similarities between the archives from Arraphē, Nuzi and Tell al-Fahḥar demonstrate that there was a single well-developed scribal tradition in force in the land of Arraphē, which dictated some habits or general practices in the presentation and content of documents. As often happens with cuneiform texts, more attention has been given to the outward appearance of the Nuzi tablets by those working on the seal impressions or “glyptic” than by the philologists concentrating on the cuneiform content. The two biggest archives – Tehip-Tilla and Šilwa-Teššup – have received comprehensive treatments by Porada and Stein respectively, and their work is fundamental to any commentary on the format of Nuzi tablets and their sealing practices, while their plates give more photographs of tablets than any philological edition, even if they concentrate on the parts showing the seal impressions. Stein in particular has devoted much attention to the issues of tablet format, in addition to sealing practice, and her careful and comprehensive account of the Šilwa-Teššup archive, reinforced by her subsequent study of the Pula-ḫali archive (Stein 2001, reveals some general practices, even though a great deal of variation can be observed.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ On the other hand Rooms D3 and D6 north-west of the temple, from which came the 280 texts listing among other things grain for the royal horses, may not have been a private residence (Lion 1999a, 52; Pedersén 1998, 20: archive no. 9: “Archive in the Arsenal”).

⁸⁹ See pp. 370–1 for the texts in question. There is no sign of a school building or mention of schooling in the texts.

⁹⁰ Porada (1947) was a path-breaking study of seal impressions on an archive of tablets, but it is also of its time in that, unlike Stein (1993), it includes no description of the tablets themselves or the positioning of impressions, and makes no attempt to make any link between the styles or iconography of the seals and the social identities of their owners. Photographs of Nuzi tablets will become available in time in the material presented by the Cuneiform Digital Library Initiative (<http://cdli.ucla.edu/>).

The Nuzi texts do not use as many technical terms for different types of tablet as those from Assyria, and almost everything is simply called a “tablet” (*tuppu*).⁹¹ We do not even know the Nuzi Akkadian for the envelopes or case-tablets used for letters and occasionally for legal and administrative documents (see pp. 367–9). Most tablets can be assigned to one of three main classes, discussed here in turn: (1) legal documents, witnessed and sealed; (2) sealed administrative tablets; and (3) unsealed tablets.

Legal documents. Regular legal documents include loans and pledge (*tidenūtu*) documents and other texts recording an obligation, deeds of sale and records of payments as part of a sale process, records of court proceedings and family law transactions including real adoptions. With formal transactions taking place in the domain of public law, witnesses were essential and they are listed after the substantive text: “before (IGI) PN”. On such public and bilateral documents we therefore find a number of seal impressions because one or sometimes both of the contracting parties and some or all of the witnesses can be expected to impress their seals.⁹² In contrast to Assyria, but in common with Babylonia from where some of the scribal families originated, seals are normally placed at the end of the document, after the list of witnesses or, in the case of legal judgements, which were sealed only by the judges, after the verdict. The scribe’s seal is normally noted at the beginning or the end of the witness list (see Figure 7.2, p. 354). As in 14th- to 13th-century Assyria, separate captions (“Seal of PN”) are ideally placed so as to identify each individual seal impression, but lack of space sometimes made this too difficult to achieve: in such cases not all the witnesses sealed or the scribe might save space by simply writing “Seal of PN” without a separate listing of the witnesses’ names.

Sealed administrative texts. For records of transactions within an organisation the officials involved often used their seals, but the text would not identify them or the scribe (if he was a different person), and there would be no witnesses.⁹³ Such documents may be classed as administrative.⁹⁴ Unlike the Tehip-Tilla archive, where the great majority of the tablets were legal deeds, most of the texts from Šilwa-Teššup’s house (those numbered AdŠ 1–547) are administrative, with only about 100 legal documents and letters (AdŠ 548–644). Within the category of sealed administrative texts there are two main types. There are informal bilateral texts, generally sealed at the end by the person accepting liability for or acknowledging receipt of the commodity in question (e.g. Figure 7.4).⁹⁵ As well as the great majority of the grain loans (Wilhelm 1992: these are mostly made to groups of debtors, listed with their patronymics, and are sealed by one or more of them), this would include the documents termed by Stein “Receipts and consignments” and “Debts and debt payments”. In this category are also work contracts and trading commissions. These may use the same formulae as legal transactions in the public sphere, but whether such bilateral texts required witnesses

⁹¹ There appears to be no mention of writing boards (*lē’u*) in the Nuzi or other Arraphan archives.

⁹² For sealing practice as illustrated by the Šilwa-Teššup archive see Stein 1993, 32–3, and note that “All formal agreements that require the presence of witnesses bear as many of their seals as possible, in addition to the seal of one or both of the contracting parties” (Stein 2001, 257).

⁹³ Stein 1993, 41.

⁹⁴ Stein 1993, 30. For the contrast between legal and administrative texts see p. 80.

⁹⁵ Stein 1993, 42.

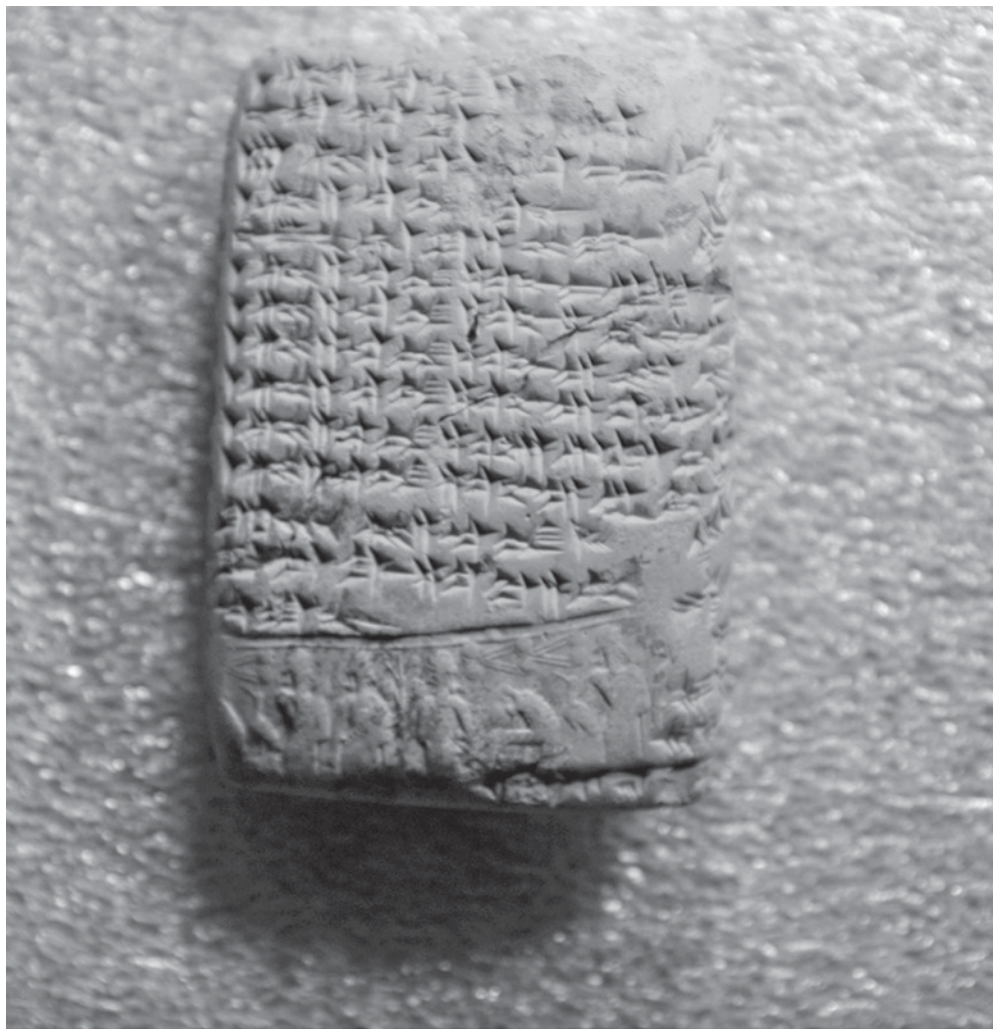


Figure 7.4. Administrative tablet from Room L14 of the palace, showing sealing at base of reverse (HSS 13 165). © Ph. Abrahami.

varied: as Stein notes “internal administrative contracts involving employees require no witnesses”, but “those involving outside agents or merchants ... were drawn up before witnesses who generally signed along with the debtor and the scribe” (1993, 48). For merchants, as we have seen, this holds within the Šilwa-Teššup archive, whereas the trade commissions from the palace needed no more than the merchant’s own signature, reflecting a close relationship with the palace if not actually membership of its permanent staff. Similarly with some craftsmen: when receiving an *iškāru* commodity from the palace, a craftsman like Hutip-Tilla the leather worker would seal the tablet, with his seal identification caption at the end of the document,⁹⁶ and the brick loans from the palace are unwitnessed (see p. 360).

⁹⁶ For example Kendall 1981, 211 on HSS 15.24.



Figure 7.5. Impression of seal of King Itḫi-Teššup on the reverse of tablet (HSS 14.3). © Diana Stein.

In the other category of sealed administrative tablets the seal is impressed by an individual who has some form of oversight over the transaction and is authorising or authenticating the contents. An extreme example of this is no doubt provided by the tablet HSS 14.3, a statement of proceedings before King Itḫi-Teššup which bears his seal across the whole reverse of the tablet (see Figure 7.5). Less ceremonially, some of Šilwa-Teššup's earliest annual barley ration lists were sealed at the end by the administrators and occasionally the scribe (Stein 1993, 39). The seals are sometimes not identified by a caption, and Stein comments that the individuals "were evidently familiar to all concerned". Similarly an early wool ration list was sealed by Šilwa-Teššup himself; unusually for an administrative text, this includes the provision that the tablet should be broken, perhaps when the final distribution to the household personnel has taken place.⁹⁷ Like the other bilateral class of sealed administrative texts, these ration lists are not witnessed, and this also applies to the palace records sealed by a group of the same three or four administrators (Tišam-mušni, Ezira, Pai-Tilla and Šurki-Tilla), records which include the list of 224 palace personnel, a long list of furniture, a list of persons from the town of Anzugalli(m) and a textile account.⁹⁸ It seems unlikely that in these instances the

⁹⁷ Wilhelm 1980, 158–60; Stein 1993, 40–1. The meaning of *šu-up-du-ma* in this clause remains unknown. The provision that a bilateral administrative document should be broken once the obligation was met is standard Assyrian practice but encountered less often at Nuzi. Stein writes here of "authorizing or authenticating the contents", but these are two different things, and I think it is fairly clear that this must be a case of (pre-)authorisation rather than authentication.

⁹⁸ For these texts and officials see Lion & Sauvage 2005, 63¹⁰.

officials are signing up to a quasi-commercial obligation; rather by impressing their seal they are either vouching for the correctness of the contents of the text or supplying proof that they have authorised a transaction it records.

Unsealed Tablets

Administrative records were very often left unsealed. Such tablets without seals or witnesses, were, as we would expect, principally unilateral documents serving the internal purposes of the organisation. Two types of unilateral record (memoranda and ledgers) were kept by those in charge of flocks (see p. 350), while in the household of Šilwa-Teššup there are simple lists (“rosters”) of personnel which were “generally unsealed” (Stein 1993, 38), as were the grain ration lists (although as mentioned previously some early barley ration lists from earlier in the archive do have seal impressions). These documents were used by the administrators to keep a long-term record of the household’s issues of rations from four different establishments outside Nuzi: “one series of key lists ... compiled by one team of administrator and scribe ... show that a single year was covered by four separate lists of monthly rations; one for each principal household” (Stein 1993, 38). In some of these lists “personal names are omitted and replaced by summaries of distributions to groups of people identified by occupation or status” (Morrison 1979, 4), making it clear that they are gathering data for the institution’s internal purposes, not to serve as evidence of a bilateral relationship.

In the public sector one particular type of document was explicitly described as a memorandum or “reminder tablet” (*tuppi taḥsilti*⁹⁹), although this description is placed at the end of the text rather than as part of an introductory formula as on adoption or pledge texts which begin *tuppi mārūti* or *tuppi tidennūti*.¹⁰⁰ Such tablets are characterised by Lion as notes keeping track of an operation. They sometimes report on interim (and unresolved) stages in a legal case, in which case they may be sealed or witnessed, for example HSS 5.46 concerning the ownership of a field, which was sealed by three persons known to be judges (Dosch 1976, No. 21), or AdŠ 263, unwitnessed but sealed (Wilhelm 1992, 134), but they may equally be a household’s internal memoranda.¹⁰¹ They could relate to a variety of situations, such as a disagreement over the price of a slave (e.g. JEN 195, Zaccagnini 1977b, 175), advances of metal (EN 9/2.452, Lion 2001a No. 51) or lists of outstanding grain disbursements.¹⁰² This phrase “reminder tablet” is used further south in Babylonia, where an extended version of the phrase

⁹⁹ See CAD T 53b for citations, giving several variant forms, not to say corruptions, of the word from Nuzi and Arraphé (e.g. *taḥiltu*, *ta-aḥ-iz-zi*). Such forms indicate that the word must have been common in the Nuzi vernacular, not merely an Akkadian technical term employed by learned scribes.

¹⁰⁰ As observed by Müller (1999b, 230).

¹⁰¹ Lion 2001a, 47 à propos No. 51, a note of amounts of tin loaned by Waḥḥurra, son of Pašši-Tilla to six persons (“Il n’y a pas de témoins, ce qui est normal pour un memorandum”). The less common *tuppi ḥussusi*, a “reminding tablet”, may be subtly different, as at least two examples were sealed (HSS 13.459:12 = AdŠ 727, Stein 1993, 43; AASOR 16 69:18).

¹⁰² For example the text treated by Müller 1999b, who points out that unsealed (and unwitnessed) tablets called *tuppi taḥsilti* need have nothing to do with court proceedings: the phrase simply means “memorandum” and was used in various social situations.

encountered in the first millennium, *ana taḥsilti lā mašê šaṭir*, is reminiscent of those (normally unsealed) texts Middle Assyrian scribes would describe as “written down so as not to be forgotten” (*ana lā mašāē šaṭir*).¹⁰³

Equally intended for an establishment’s internal organisation are texts which group a number of transactions on a single tablet, often referred to by the convenient German terms *Sammeltafel* or *Sammelurkunde*. As Grosz comments, “Sammelurkunden were internal records of estate or revenue and not legally binding acts. They were not sealed, nor did they contain witness lists” (1988, 107⁴⁶). A few such tablets were kept in the House of Teḥip-Tilla. Maidman comments that we might expect the essential data of different land transactions to “be summarized and recorded on a series of inventory tablets. However, only seven such tablets at most may be so classified amongst the hundreds of Teḥip-Tilla family real estate texts” (1979, 66). This scarcity of long-term internal recording is typical of most Nuzi archives, but it is clear that efforts were sometimes made in this direction. Alongside more than 200 grain loans from the house of Šilwa-Teššup there are just five tablets¹⁰⁴ which summarise the data from a large number of the individual loan documents. To take one example, AdŠ 251 has rulings separating the data taken from individual tablets and concludes “Total 20 tablet(s) which have been copied (*šubalkutu*). Total 329 (homers) of grain loans”. Some of the original loan tablets have survived and are sealed (e.g. AdŠ 195, listed in AdŠ 250:18–22),¹⁰⁵ but as to be expected, the compilations are unsealed.

Sealed Letters and Envelopes

A good proportion of letters were sealed at the end (i.e. usually at the base of the reverse) by the named author, with a caption identifying the seal, similarly to sealed internal administrative documents, which in a sense they often are.¹⁰⁶ Others were enclosed in an envelope, for example AdŠ 595 (HSS 15.255), a sealed envelope for an unsealed tablet, with the sender’s name written and his (or her) seal impressed, on the exterior.¹⁰⁷ This practice, also common to Assyria and other periods and places, achieves physical protection for the text on the inner tablet (which by definition must have undergone transport), conceals the contents of the letter from all but the recipient and guarantees the authorship.

Envelopes enclosing tablets other than letters are scarce, as at Middle Assyrian Aššur, because they were not used for most types of legal and administrative documents. Exceptional is the envelope enclosing a formal record of legal proceedings, JEN 321. The tablet was written by Urḫi-Teššup and sealed by two state judicial officials (*sukkallu*) and 14 other witnesses, but the envelope simply has “[(Seal)stone] of Urḫi-Teššup, the scribe” written on it, no doubt

¹⁰³ CAD T 53b; for the Middle Assyrian phrase see p. 80.

¹⁰⁴ Wilhelm 1992, Nos. 250–4.

¹⁰⁵ See Wilhelm 1992, 105–6.

¹⁰⁶ For one such letter – from Mušteya – see Deller 1983, with a list of other letter tablets sealed in this way on p. 161²⁷.

¹⁰⁷ Stein 1993, 36; also HSS 14.24 (transliteration: Fadhil 1983, 31–2).

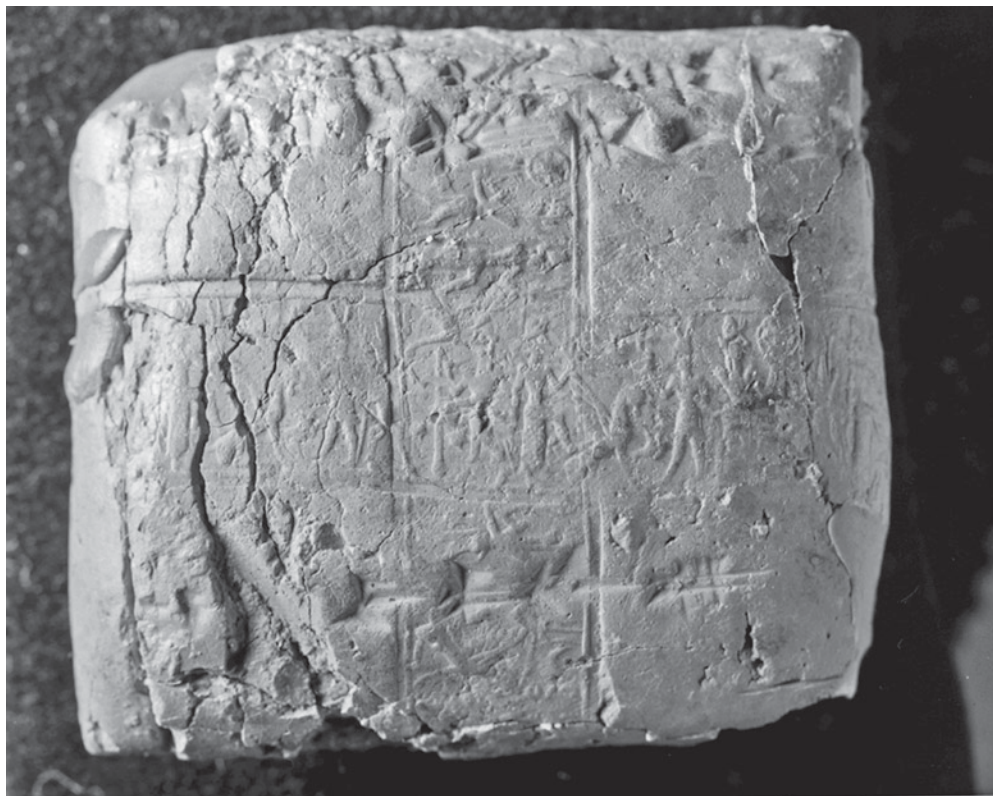


Figure 7.6. Envelope to AdŠ 97 showing seal impression of Ḫašip-apu with caption (below). © Diana Stein.

alongside his seal impression.¹⁰⁸ Perhaps this was intended to give physical protection, either because it was being transported or simply for long-term storage. Other envelopes are found on a miscellaneous handful of tablets in the Šilwa-Teššup archive noted by Stein. She concludes that “the regular use of envelopes in administrative contexts cannot be established”.¹⁰⁹ Nevertheless it is striking that in five cases the envelope, which gives a summary of the interior tablet, also bears the seal of the high-ranking Ḫašip-apu, son of Taḫirišti (see p. 375, footnote 133), although he is not mentioned in the text of any of the tablets. Three of the five are ration lists, and two are concerned with animal husbandry, and it seems clear that the addition of an envelope to the tablet enables Ḫašip-apu as a third party to indicate his authorisation or approval of the document. One of these, AdŠ 178, is an unsealed tablet with a brief note of two amounts of grain issued, and the text on the envelope is even briefer, but interestingly begins with “Tablet of ...” (*tup-pu ša ...*); the same is true of AdŠ 97, illustrated in Figure 7.6. This is strongly reminiscent of the Middle Assyrian practice of introducing the text on an envelope

¹⁰⁸ See Maidman 2010 No. 61. Diana Stein informs me that Porada was unable to include this tablet and envelope in her work since they were on exhibition at the time.

¹⁰⁹ Stein 1993, 36.

with the word *tup-pí* (see pp. 71–2).¹¹⁰ These envelopes are all used for transactions internal to the household, not on external bilateral documents such as debt-notes, and there is a definite parallel here with the Middle Assyrian use of case-tablets called *kiširtu* to record the ratification of a transaction by a third neutral party within the administration.¹¹¹

An Alternative Recording System

Tablets recording the consignment of an animal for fattening were also enclosed in an envelope giving a summary of the contents and sealed by the herdsman.¹¹² This extra formality may reflect the fact that shepherds, like merchants, spent much of the year out of reach of the household, and the need for a formalised bilateral document is underlined by a parallel recording procedure mentioned in animal husbandry texts, which refer to stones used as counters, evidently serving as a way of storing information in place of tablets (Stein 1993, 47). Nuzi has produced one example of this device, showing that “stones” should be taken literally (Abusch 1981). A simple square tablet with a seal impression on the reverse lists a flock of 49 sheep and goats and states that they have been entrusted to Ziqarru the shepherd (*ana ŠU Ziqarru ... LÚ.SIPA nadnū*). The numbers are precisely matched by numbers inscribed on a sealed oval bulla with the heading “stones of sheep” (NA₄.MEŠ *ša* UDU.MEŠ), with a caption to the impression identifying Ziqarru as the owner of the seal. What is unique is that the excavators recovered from inside the bulla 49 small pebbles. We may reasonably conclude that Ziqarru was not himself literate, so that he could be reassured by the presence of 49 pebbles (and no more) that he was signing up to the right number of animals, even if the pebbles could not differentiate in the same way as the cuneiform texts between species, age and sex. Abusch suggests that the shepherd would normally retain a bulla of this sort, and indeed other Nuzi cuneiform flock counts, including several from the Šilwa-Teššup archive, do mention animals which “have not been downloaded (*nadû*) into the stones” (1981, 8).¹¹³ The use of stones does seem to be confined to flock counts of one kind or another, and we should see this particular recording device as designed for the interaction of literate administrators with shepherds who we may reasonably expect to be unlettered, even if, like Ziqarru, they had their own seals.¹¹⁴

Seal Substitutes

The case of Ziqarru the shepherd may partly at least account for the absence at Nuzi of the impression of a debtor’s fingernail as a substitute for his seal, a practice which is attested in

¹¹⁰ See Wilhelm 1985 no. 178, and for the envelope and its text see Wilhelm 1992, 158. The envelopes for AdŠ 34 and 97 also have a brief note beginning *tup-pu ša ...*, and 97 has a caption identifying Ḫašip-apu’s seal.

¹¹¹ Dr Lion informs me that there are also rare envelopes among the palace administrative documents, for example HSS 15.2, but these have not yet been studied as a group.

¹¹² Stein 1993, 43–4.

¹¹³ Passages cited in CAD A/i, 60. For Šilwa-Teššup see Stein mentioning AdŠ 389–92 (1993, 47); see Stein 1993, 147: “11. Acknowledgments of *muddu*- and shearing-obligations not registered among the counting stones” and “12. Acknowledgments of *muddu*-obligations not registered among the counting stones”.

¹¹⁴ For seal ownership cf. Stein 2001, 254.

Babylonia and had been adopted in Assyria by the 12th century at the latest.¹¹⁵ Perhaps this was simply not required because seal ownership was general throughout all echelons of society, reinforcing the perception of Arraphian society as rather well integrated.

Not infrequently we read in a legal document that one of the parties has “drawn his hem” using the phrase *qanna mašāru*.¹¹⁶ In Nuzi, as more generally in earlier centuries, the hem or fringe of a person’s garment had symbolic significance and a variety of actions using the *qannu* are encountered in legal texts (see CAD Q 83–4).¹¹⁷ This action is not recorded at the end of the text where the seals are impressed, but incorporated in the body of the narrative, and despite the well-attested contemporary Babylonian practice of impressing the garment fringe (*sissiqtu*) on a tablet in lieu of a seal (CAD S 323a), Stein was evidently right to conclude that “a hem impression did not, therefore, substitute for a seal” (1993, 78). Indeed there is no sign on any of the tablets in question of the impression of a textile hem.¹¹⁸ Moreover, as Malul correctly notes in the course of his lengthy discussion of the phrase, the persons carrying out this act are not the debtors or sellers, but the other party to the transaction who is “discharging an obligation”.¹¹⁹

The Role of Writing at Nuzi

Taken as a whole, the cuneiform material from Nuzi may reasonably be seen as representative of the role of written documents in the society. The town itself was of course considerably smaller than the city of Aššur, and a much larger percentage of its buildings was explored by the excavators than is the case for the Middle Assyrian levels at Aššur. The degree of similarity among different Nuzi archives, and prosopographic interconnections between them, also tend to suggest that what we now have is a fairly representative sample. If certain classes of text are rare or absent from the surviving corpus, this may genuinely reflect the composition of documentation chosen by the society to be preserved. Letters, for instance, are relatively scarce, and at Nuzi we have no literary, or non-utilitarian, texts, and only a single fragmentary

¹¹⁵ For Babylonia see CAD § 251–2; for Assyria see p. 74.

¹¹⁶ From Arraphē in Grosz 1988, 70 (e.g. Gadd No. 10 and Yale No. 1); from Nuzi in Stein 2001, 262; Lion 2001 Nos. 1 and 2 from Pula-ḫali. The verb *mašāru* means to “draw, drag”, and the phrase has usually been understood to imply that the hem has been applied to the wet clay of a tablet, but Malul suggests that some other (unexpressed) object is drawn or “brushed” across the hem. This seems possible, and there is undeniably no evidence that a tablet was involved in the action. Cf. also Wilhelm 1992, 135–6.

¹¹⁷ See also Liverani 1977.

¹¹⁸ This was observed by Malul (1988, 324) and is confirmed by more recent publications and by inspection of the tablets – which all come from the temple – by Lion and Stein (B. Lion. pers. comm.). Thus four tablets from the Šilwa-Teššup archive mention this procedure, but in no case is there apparently a textile impression on the clay (Stein 1993, 78), and the same applies to the three tablets bearing this phrase in the Pašši-Tilla archive (Stein 2001, 262) [the absence of textile impressions on JEN 186 and RA 23, 33 is also confirmed by J. Justel’s collations].

¹¹⁹ Malul 1988, 325, his emphasis; this observation is also supported by subsequent publications. Thus in the Šilwa-Teššup archive in two cases it is a person paying who takes this action, whereas a seal would normally be impressed by the person acknowledging receipt; and in the two other instances it is the adoptee in a land adoption deed (i.e. the purchaser), and not the “adoptive father” (Stein 1993, 78).

royal inscription.¹²⁰ There is just one omen text and a handful of lexical lists.¹²¹ This need not surprise us, because texts of this kind are also virtually absent from the provincial and private Middle Assyrian archives which have come down to us. The majority of tablets from the early generations at Nuzi are legal documents from the private sector, which is a familiar Mesopotamian situation reflecting the fact that conveyance documents acting as title deeds to property in real estate or slaves were intended to be, and were, retained for generations, whereas most administrative documents would have outlived their usefulness after a year or two, and at Nuzi tend to come from the closing years of the Nuzi archives.¹²²

Writing in Arraphan Society

The life of the town of Nuzi and the land of Arraphē displays abundant use of written documents for economic and social purposes, as in contemporary Assyria, and statements within some of these documents give a clear indication that the existence of a written instrument was important if not essential to establish certain rights of ownership or entitlement to credit. To what extent these practices were affected by time and space is of course very difficult to determine: commenting on the landholdings of the Wullu family of Arraphē, Grosz writes “Some property certainly was in the family for generations without there being any written record of it ...” and further “I imagine that a large portion of land was owned in this way, without any written documents. These came into being when the circumstances of ownership were undergoing a change”.¹²³ Likewise of the Tehip-Tilla archive at Nuzi, Maidman notes: “Whereas written contracts seem to have been typical in real estate transactions involving outsiders, documents for transfers within the family were reserved for situations other than the typical father-son pattern. No surviving text reflects the typical transfer pattern” (1979, 3⁶). No doubt a similar situation obtained with family law documents: the formally witnessed and sealed tablets recorded the departures from the norm or sometimes cases where significant amounts of wealth were at stake. There can be no doubt that some of the Nuzi families were wealthy and that this was at least partially at the expense of others less well off: it is understandable that (as we see at Aššur in the 14th century) their entitlement to landholdings needed to be backed up by written instruments whose validity would be recognised by the state-regulated law courts. In the same way, the social inequality represented by some of the *tidennūtu* documents recording an obligation of personal service to one Nuzi citizen by another would also make the existence of a legally recognised document desirable.

¹²⁰ Meek, HSS 10 no. 231. The clay tablet is in Assyrian script, and curiously not edited in Grayson 1987, 335, which only gives seal inscriptions.

¹²¹ Apart from the single omen text (Enuma Anu Enlil, Lacheman 1937; from room D6 in the building north of the temple, according to Lion 1999a, 52), there is a small group of nine lexical texts (mainly UR₅.RA=*hubullū*) attesting to connections with the Babylonian scribal tradition (Lacheman 1939). They were mostly found in the houses in the south-west sector of the mound in P313 and one in K465, with another from Room 151 (see Morrison 1987, 187; Pedersén 1998, 23; Lion 1999a, 55–6; Negri Scafa 1999, 72–3).

¹²² An exception is provided by the *rākib narkabti* lists associated with the archives of Akap-senni s. Zike s. Akkuya “dont certaines comptent parmi les plus anciennes retrouvées à Nuzi” (Lion 1999a, 48 on A34).

¹²³ Grosz 1988, 60, with fn. 4 on p. 106.

Despite the difficulty of allowing for the chances of discovery, it seems likely that the prevalence of written documentation in these areas of social relations during the century or two of the Nuzi texts and within the frontiers of the land of Arrapḫe was unusually high. The conventions in force here cannot have extended much further in space, given that there was Assyria to the west and north, Babylonia to the south and the (probably illiterate) “Lullu” lands to the east. It is impossible to guess how far back the written practices may have stretched beyond the earliest attested Nuzi families, and we know nothing of whether their tradition could have survived the Assyrian destruction of Nuzi (and other towns in the kingdom). In terms of the distribution of written documentation within the society, Grosz thought that “writing had a different impact in different strata of the society. There is no doubt that in the sphere of central/royal/official administration the importance of writing was overwhelming. Surely, it grew less important, the further it moved away from the official sphere. In the rural countryside the impact of writing would have been negligible. There would of course be certain aspects of e.g. economy (transfer of immovables, for example) where written statements were traditionally used. Certain social groups (such as merchants) would obviously also manifest a high degree of literacy” (Grosz 1988, 158, footnote 6). However, the example of Tell al-Faḫḫar, with more than 600 tablets from a single farmstead, makes one doubt whether there was in the Land of Arrapḫe an illiterate penumbra round the towns. The sheer number of scribes attested in the Nuzi texts, some of whom worked at other settlements, also suggests there was a fairly dense and uniform scribal culture across the kingdom.

The rich body of documents from family law makes it very clear that as one might expect Arrapḫan society was largely built round the patriarchal (and patrilocal) family. Archives from private houses often stretch back for three generations, and both property and real estate were passed down from fathers to their sons. While most of the population of Nuzi must have been directly or indirectly reliant on agricultural output, there is also evidence for families active as businessmen and merchants over more than one generation, such as the Pašši-Tilla and Ḫašip-Tilla archives. The documentation of their activities was often recovered from the buildings at Nuzi we must presume were their family residences, although the Pašši-Tilla family may have originated from Tupšarriniwe, and retained its interests and no doubt a residential base there too. The most elaborate household at Nuzi was almost certainly the House of Šilwa-Teššup, but in principle it was an extreme version of the standard household, with more space, more personnel, more agricultural enterprise and more commodities at its disposal. As we have noted previously (pp. 361–2), from some households were retrieved documents concerned with state administration, and it seems certain that the state drew on the members of elite families to act as its agents or officials. Hence private archives shared space with state documentation and involved the same people: it is hardly surprising therefore that we find resemblances between the two written traditions.

Writing in the State Sector at Nuzi

Written documents were certainly employed by the state in the practice of government, although at present we lack certain genres: we have no laws, nor are there state land grants

or tax exemptions, known in Kassite Babylonia and in first-millennium Assyria. We might have if a comparable body of material had been recovered from the capital at Arrapḫe. The government there needed to communicate with its palaces and its own personnel across the territory, on both judicial and administrative (especially military) affairs, and we do have clear if scarce evidence for this in a variety of forms.

As we would expect, the king himself, as well as his close officials, might send directions out to their representatives in the different palaces on specific occasions, or to the formal representatives of each community. Commenting on one letter (JEN 494) K. Deller wrote that, as with Neo-Assyrian royal orders, its style is laconic, but unambiguous: it includes the legitimation of the courier and the command to fulfil his transport needs (in the shape of a light chariot).¹²⁴ More formally, though, the royal court also promulgated a class of decree known as a *šūdûtu*. It is generally assumed that such decrees when mentioned at Nuzi were issued by the king from the palace at Arrapḫe. That it came from the king is clear where the text uses the phrase “he has decreed” (*ultedi* or *uštedi*),¹²⁵ and on one occasion we have an actual decree tablet complete with the seal of the king (HSS 15.1:48, see Deller 1983). The decrees might address a variety of issues which required the intervention of the state: regulating the amount payable to a merchant for ransoming a citizen of Arrapḫe from abroad (JEN 195, e.g. Zaccagnini 1977b, 175), or the *ilku* duties owed by the inhabitants of certain towns.¹²⁶ Although we may guess that such decrees were read out in public, probably at a city gate or the gate of a palace, some were certainly also distributed in written form. AASOR 16.51 would seem to be a copy of an earlier royal decree, sealed by two high officials,¹²⁷ concerning the fate of daughters of palace personnel – with a requirement that it be read out every 3rd or 4th year “so that it be not forgotten (*ana lā mašê*)”.¹²⁸ The tablet HSS 15.1, sealed by the king, Mušṭeya, describes itself as an “edict” (*šūdûtu*), and is addressed to the mayor of a single town (Taššuḫewe), but the instructions in the body of the text are intended for “every mayor” (*[att]amannu hazannu*). It seems clear that the mayors are held responsible for events within their territory, which is presumably the land claimed by a settlement (*ālu*). The owners of farmsteads (LÚ.EN.MEŠ AN.ZA.GÀR) are to be notified by the “governor of the land” (*šakin māti*) who “will give them individually tablets” (*tuppātu ana aḫinnû inandi<n>aššunûti*) with instructions in them. The essential role of writing is evident: copies of the royal edict are disseminated from Arrapḫe to the mayors of the different

¹²⁴ Deller 1983, 156.

¹²⁵ For example in HSS 14.9 and JEN 195 (see Lion 1999b, 320²⁹).

¹²⁶ HSS 14.9 from Room G29 in the temple area on the main mound (Maidman 2010, No. 76; cf. Lion 1999b, 320); the text is not explicitly called a *šūdûtu*, but uses the word *uš-te-di* (the king) “decreed”.

¹²⁷ They were Heltip-apu and Kartip-erwa (HSS 13 Pl. 9 B); Diana Stein writes (pers. comm. 4.ii.2013) that “both seals have plain metal caps, an indication of status. Those on the seal used by Heltip-apu are unusually wide (and replace the original caps decorated with granulation). The imagery on both seals and the presence of an inscription also denote high status. The seal used by Heltip-apu = Adš seal no. 406, an office seal that was used by several individuals in several official capacities, beginning with Ar-šalim (a contemporary of Hišmi-Teššup, whose name is inscribed on the seal) and ending with Sar-Teššup s. Pai-Tilla. Pai-Tilla is most often associated with this seal, but often it appears without caption. So yes, it would appear that AASOR 16–51 was signed by 2 high officials.”

¹²⁸ Copy: Lacheman 1976, 145–6 No. 9.

towns, and in addition to this the governor of the land has to pass the instructions on in writing to individual *dimtu*-owners.¹²⁹

The centralised control in political affairs which this edict exercises can be paralleled in the judicial sphere. We have seen that the judicial system was headed by the monarch and his high officials based at Arrapḫe, but administered locally by local judges, who remained in communication with the centre. Some *šūdûtu* edicts were debt relief measures of the kind known from Old Babylonian times as *andurāru*, a word occasionally encountered in the Nuzi and Arrapḫe texts, sometimes replaced by the Hurrian term *kirenzi*.¹³⁰ It is generally agreed that where these terms are used we are witnessing royal edicts decreeing the release of those serving as debt slaves. There is less agreement about the significance of the frequent statements that a tablet had been written “after the edict” (*arki šūdûti*): one elaborate example reads “The tablet was written after the new edict in accordance with the command of the king, of the month of Kinunati of the “City of the gods” (Arrapḫe), in the month of Mitiruni in Nuzi”.¹³¹ Where phrases like this are found in a text recording the alienation of real estate or in a loan document, there is a temptation to draw parallels from other Mesopotamian times and places and assume that the scribe is stating that the transaction should not be affected by a previous royal edict cancelling debts incurred as loans and land transactions driven by economic coercion. Among Nuzi specialists the frequency and apparent normality of this clause there has bred scepticism that this could universally have been the case, but no more convincing alternative has yet been proposed. Regrettably, we have as yet no example of such a *šūdûtu*, a reminder that however voluminous our written sources are, they are inevitably an imperfect reflection of the whole picture.¹³²

The great bulk of state documentation from Nuzi itself naturally reflects the administrative processes of the local palace. It includes ration and personnel lists relating to the palace's own residents and employees; records of commodities produced or consumed as part of its regular activities, including agriculture, animal husbandry and manufacturing; and a variety of documents concerned with the provision of personnel and equipment for the army. A great many of these tablets are unilateral memoranda or lists intended for the internal consumption of the palace staff. There are also informal bilateral documents, sealed by individuals acknowledging an obligation to the palace: these are mostly still internal to the palace administration and involve people regularly engaged in the palace's activities, as is apparent from the lack of filiation and absence of witnesses. A very similar situation evidently prevailed in the household of Šilwa-Teššup, who was the king's son, and it is clear that documentary practice, in particular the use of less formal bilateral documents to control transactions within an organisation was not the sole preserve of the palace but could be found in larger households too.

¹²⁹ Cassin 1982, 115–17; Deller 1983; Maidman 2010, 30–3 No. 8. In passing, it may be worth remarking that *nadû* in this text, which has often been translated “abandoned”, would more plausibly be rendered as “situated”.

¹³⁰ Cf. in particular HSS 9.102 and EN 9/1.195 described in Lion 1999b, 320 and Zaccagnini 2002, 184–5, where both *šūdûtu* and *andurāru/kirenzi* occur.

¹³¹ Or JEN 478, 9–12: “The tablet was written after the edict (*arki šūdûti*) of the palace at the door of the city-gate of Temtenaš” (Deller 1981, 63). See also Maidman 2010 No. 81:35–9.

¹³² On the thorny question of the nature of the *šūdûtu* edicts referred to in legal documents see Lion 1999b; Zaccagnini 2002 (citing voluminous earlier literature).

Nuzi and Aššur compared

The Role of the Monarchy

In time and space, Nuzi, or rather the Land of Arrapḫe, is the nearest neighbour of Aššur in the 14th century. In both lands written documents played a major role in the political, legal and commercial regulation of society. At first sight their written output makes the two states look remarkably dissimilar, but on closer inspection they can be seen to have much in common. Although with the passage of time the Land of Aššur expanded into a different order of magnitude, the two states had a broadly similar structure. In Assyria the provincial governors channelled the intentions of the central government to their territory from their palaces: the indications are that the earlier *ḫalzuḫlu/ḫassihlu* in charge of a district called *ḫalzu* was replaced in the 13th century by the *bēl pāḫiti* and that the province then became known as a *pāḫutu*. In Arrapḫe, there is a *šakin māti*, “governor of the land” some of the time at least resident at Nuzi,¹³³ and it is clear that the palace at Nuzi was a local seat of government. Opinions are still sharply divided as to whether the *ḫalzuḫlu* at Nuzi fulfilled a similar function to his Assyrian counterpart and had general responsibility for a district called *ḫalzu*, or some more specialised role.¹³⁴ For communication between the centre and the local palaces the Middle Assyrian state made extensive use of “(royal) representatives” – *qēpūte (ša šarri)* – to mediate between the central state authorities (the king, his immediate entourage) and officials elsewhere. This term is not prevalent at Nuzi: to some extent the need was less, given the smaller scale of the kingdom (Nuzi was only 17 kilometres from the capital), but where the king at Arrapḫe does need to convey instructions on administrative affairs which require more than a sealed letter, this task seems to be entrusted to a person of high status acting as an “envoy” (*mār šipri*).¹³⁵ At Nuzi we also meet the herald as a highly placed state official particularly concerned with military affairs, although he presumably had other duties as well.¹³⁶ The same may apply to Aššur, if it is the heralds who are the eponymous officials after whom the writing-boards listing army conscripts are named (see p. 27).¹³⁷

¹³³ But Ḥašip-apu s. Taḫirišti, who was a high administrator within the household of Šilwa-Teššup often given the title *ḫalzuḫlu*, is also once called *šakin māti* (see Kolinski 2001, 13).

¹³⁴ Against the idea that he was a governor responsible for a province (*ḫalzu*) is Maidman 1981. On the other hand neither Dosch (e.g. 1993) nor Zaccagnini (1979) has a problem with seeing *ḫalzu* as a district. For the provincial system in Assyria in detail see now Llop 2011.

¹³⁵ See Mayer 1978, 162 and compare Negri Scafa 2009a, 472 in connection with barley transport. See also Ḫutiya, s. Kuššiya the “envoy of the king”, who features in Šilwa-Teššup’s archive (Wilhelm 1992, 103 citing AdŠ 516 and 550, and in court judgements AdŠ 586–7); and Tatip-Teššup, a prince and “envoy of the palace” (mentioned in Wilhelm 1992, 140). I am grateful to Dr Ph. Abrahams for allowing me to cite from his Habilitation (Abrahams 2012) instances of a *mār šipri* identified at the end of a transaction, similarly to the mention of a *qēpu* at the end of some Assyrian administrative documents (see p. 29): HSS 14.130, 134, 149, 150, 154; HSS 15.232.

¹³⁶ See for example HSS 9.6 where the mayor (*ḫazannu*) of Anzugallu has the herald assemble troops (Cassin 1982, 108), and other similar situations described by her on pp. 104–6. She notes (p. 99) that, like scribes, the herald is not given rations by the palace at Nuzi.

¹³⁷ Note the association between heralds and state call-up in a 9th-century decree, where temple staff are exempted from conscription for “*ilku*, *tupšikku*, the levy of the land (*dikāt māti*) and proclamation of the herald (*šisit nāgiri*)” (Kataja & Whiting 1995 No. 60 rev. 26).

In both states the king certainly had a nominal role as the ultimate judicial authority, but it seems likely that the close-knit nature of his dominion would have made it more practicable for the king of Arrapḫe to be materially involved with the administration of justice for all his subjects than for the Assyrian king, based at the south-eastern extremity of his territory with some provinces 300 kilometres distant in the 13th century. While Assyria has left us a number of tablets of laws, records of judicial proceedings are extremely scarce, whereas many court cases have been recovered from the private archives at Nuzi. The Assyrian king held the title *uklu* (“overseer”) inherited from earlier centuries, which was employed in contexts where he acted in a judicial role, such as promulgating an edict (*riksu*). Some such edicts were generally applicable in public contexts, but we also have a compendium from successive monarchs which regulated behaviour within the four walls of the palace. Royal decrees in Arrapḫe are termed *šūdûtu*, and we do have mention of at least one which was specifically concerned with the behaviour of palace personnel, but the same term was used for edicts which affected public commercial life in particular, in some cases at least decreeing the cancellation of debt enslavement. Some, if not all, of the edicts were committed to writing, although surviving examples are few and far between. In Assyria at this time there is no mention of such *andurāru* decrees,¹³⁸ to my knowledge, but it must remain an open question whether they were simply not current at Aššur, or are just not mentioned in any of the document types which have come down to us.

Whereas in Assyria the king as *uklu* had formal oversight over land sale transactions, alluded to in the phrases “he shall measure it with the king’s rope” and “he shall write the valid tablet before the king”, by contrast the elaborate Nuzi sale adoption formulae avoid all mention of royal involvement. Yet in both states an *ilku* system was in place which was in part at least connected to the tenure of land. Current Assyriological opinion about the nature of *ilku* duties at Nuzi is sharply divided, and I must leave open whether the differences from Assyria reflect a fundamentally divergent system, perhaps modelled on Babylonia,¹³⁹ or are simply surface manifestations of a basically similar regime derived in each case from the Mittanian state.

Households in Government Service

In Arrapḫe the social order does seem, formally at least, to have revolved round the performance of military service and/or *ilku* duties, since texts list the highest-ranking members of society in four categories as chariot riders (the Nuzi equivalent of *mariannu*), followed by *nakkuššu*, “*ilku* performers” (*ālik ilki*) and “tenants” (*aššābu*).¹⁴⁰ Presumably many if not

¹³⁸ Although the *durāru* is attested in Neo-Assyrian legal documents, and in the Old Assyrian period King Ilušuma reports on his institution of an *andurārum* for merchants from outside Aššur.

¹³⁹ As implied in Maidman 2010, 164. Dosch’s view (1993, 83, 94, 100) that *ilku* cannot refer to military service because it is mentioned alongside *dikūtu* (“conscription”) does not seem compelling, but it certainly can refer to civilian service.

¹⁴⁰ See Dosch 1983, 74–6; Dosch 2009, with editions of seventy documents relating to the chariot riders. For helpful summaries of the Arrapḫan social classes recorded in these military rosters see Von Dassow 2008, 351–6 and 2009,

all of the highest officials in the administrative hierarchy would have been drawn from the highest social ranks, just as in Assyria higher-placed government officials were often members of elite families with an independent position in society,¹⁴¹ extreme cases being Babu-aḥa-iddina under Shalmaneser and Ili-pada under Tukulti-Ninurta. From both of these we have ample evidence – from Babu-aḥa-iddina’s house in Aššur and from Ili-pada’s personal farmstead (*dunnu*) at Sabi Abyad – for elaborate household administrations separate from the palace. The extreme case at Nuzi is of course the House of Prince Šilwa-Teššup: prince he may have been, but his establishment, like those of other elite families, lay off the ancient mound, clearly separated physically from the palace proper.

It is understandable that just as the state would exploit the expertise and experience acquired by those administering large household enterprises, it also benefitted from using their material resources in the form of manpower and premises. So just as in Aššur, where the Urad-Šerua Archive from a private house included documents deriving from the family’s activities in government administration, so at Nuzi we have seen that documents related to state administrative activity were sometimes stored in private residences – a prime example of this being the texts from Room A34 which included both private documents and a number of the lists of military personnel mentioned earlier.¹⁴² The reverse case – private records stored in the palace – is attested with the archives of a lady called Tulpunnaya, which were stored in Room N120 which appears to be a room of the palace.¹⁴³

When single households were simultaneously engaged in their own affairs and fulfilling government duties, we should expect not only a mixture of the actual documentation for the parallel activities, but also a degree of similarity in the administrative procedures. The documentary practices of the scribes administering Babu-aḥa-iddina’s household resemble those of government institutions such as the Stewards’ Archive, and the same can be said about Šilwa-Teššup’s voluminous records: like the palaces, the households had their own internal procedures, with administrative formats distinct from the legal documents used in external contexts. This does not however mean in either Arrapḫe or Assyria that the affairs and property of the state and the private household were merged and not perceived as separate. In both states the majority of administrative documentation clearly observes the difference between commodities belonging to a person and those for which he merely has administrative responsibility. At Nuzi the dossier of the mayor Kušši-Ḫarbe’s malpractices¹⁴⁴ is sufficient evidence that officials were expected to observe this difference too, and that the administration was prepared to enforce this. The parallelism between legal and administrative bilateral

612–14, where she writes that “the class denoted *nakkušše*, a Hurrian word formed from the verb *nakk-* ‘send forth’ or ‘release’, may have been called so on the basis of being released or exempted from a duty (presumably *ilku*) that was normally incumbent on free subjects of the realm”. This sounds temptingly similar to the class of persons called *zakkū* “exempted” in Neo-Assyrian sources (Postgate 1974, 241–3), but to my knowledge there is no comparable term attested in the Middle Assyrian sources at present.

¹⁴¹ See p. 372. At Aššur some high officials were royal eunuchs (p. 29), but at Nuzi we do not hear much about eunuchs.

¹⁴² Dosch 1976. See p. 362.

¹⁴³ Lion 1999, 49. For private records in a palace, see p. 384 on Alalah.

¹⁴⁴ See most recently Maidman 2010, chapter 2.

contracts in itself suggests that not only the form of words but also an ethos of accountability were shared by the two sectors.

Documentary Practices – Legal

At first sight the regular legal documentation used in daily life looks surprisingly different in the two neighbouring states. There are some types of document at Nuzi which are virtually absent in Assyria, notably the records of court decisions, the frequent adoptions, both real and fictitious and the *tidennūtu* contracts, but even for similar transactions the differences can be quite striking. These are most consistently seen in the formulation and presentation of the text. While Assyrian scribes in the 14th century and later used their own cuneiform duc-tus and Assyrian dialect, we know that there were some Babylonian scribes active at Aššur (see pp. 47–8), and the language and formulae of Middle Assyrian documents were an amal-gam of practices inherited from Old Assyrian times and others imported from Babylonia. At Nuzi, although here too there were scribes of Babylonian origin, the Akkadian of most of the documentation was heavily distorted by Hurrian, with frequent loan words, un-Babylonian rendering of phonemes and un-Akkadian syntax.¹⁴⁵ Most strikingly, the Arrapḫan scribes did not use a dating system which specified the year.¹⁴⁶ Days and months may be mentioned, but the rare references to events in a year are clearly not part of an organised system of year names of the kind used in Old Babylonian times.¹⁴⁷ Why they did not adopt a regnal year system, as in Kassite Babylonia, or imitate the Assyrian system of eponyms, remains a mys-tery. As a result it is difficult to establish the relative date of all Nuzi (and Arrapḫe and Tell al-Faḥḥar) tablets, and the best framework for doing this has been through the five genera-tions of scribes attested in the Tehip-Tilla Archive in particular.¹⁴⁸

Nuzi transactions also reflect a range of colourful archaic characteristics which do not fea-ture in surviving documentation from Assyria, but are reminiscent of the tendency to allude to symbolic acts in contemporary legal documents from further west.¹⁴⁹ Instead of a largely metal-based currency, payments were often made in a conventional package of commodities

¹⁴⁵ See Wilhelm 1970, and more recently the comments of Negri Scafa 1999, 68–9.

¹⁴⁶ This is not, however, confined to Nuzi: western traditions for example at Ugarit, Alalakh and Emar share this reluctance to date their documents.

¹⁴⁷ Remarks like “when the king came from Karana to Nuzi” (cf. Fadhil 1983, 97 and Cassin 1958, 21 for this and other examples) are not dates but explanatory text describing the circumstances of (and hence sometimes justification for) an individual transaction, and we find similar comments in properly dated Middle Assyrian documents (Freydank 1982c). Cf. also Kolinski 2001, 91; Zaccagnini 2002, 188–9 and see now Negri Scafa, who also lists texts written “when PN was carrying out the mayorate (*ḫazannūta*)” (2008, 123). John Bennet notes that Linear B texts not infrequently have a clause like “when the king did x” (e.g. on the occasion of a feast, cf. Palaima 2004).

¹⁴⁸ The most substantial recent contributions on the scribal generations include Friedmann 1987; Dosch and Deller 1981; other references in Lion 2001a, 14; the table facing Maidman 2010, 1 gives a very handy summary of the scribal family of Apil-Sin and its correlation with the royal family, with the family of Tehip-Tilla and with the family of Kizzuk, which also provide relative chronological markers. For scribes at Nuzi in general see Negri Scafa 1987; 1992; 1999.

¹⁴⁹ Some examples from Alalakh and Ugarit are given by Kilmer, (1974). An agenda addressed in due course by Malul 1988 (*Studies in Mesopotamian Legal Symbolism*) is also set out by her in this article (1974, 182–3).

varying with the nature of the transaction (see p. 357). Some legal processes involved participants in symbolic gestures, such as the “brushing of the hem”.¹⁵⁰ In inheritance documents the duties of an heir towards his parents may be spelled out in vivid detail, including the care of the family gods and “ghosts”, some of which can be seen to be figurines or statues of some kind.¹⁵¹ Furthermore, the verbal formulae used for loans and debts are different in the two states, and the legal processes employed in land sale are entirely at odds with each other. Yet despite these differences the underlying reality of some of the transactions, such as grain or metal loans and commissions or herding contracts, was probably very similar, and the degree to which social and economic relationships were regulated in writing seems comparable in the two states, doubtless in part thanks to their proximity in time and space.

Documentary Practices – Administrative

At Nuzi, within the organisation of both the palace and private households, similar administrative conventions were used, with the degree of formality depending on how closely and regularly the parties were associated. The great majority of grain loans from Šilwa-Teššup's household are sealed by one or more of the borrowers, but not witnessed, and in the case of brick loans (see p. 360) or merchant commissions, the palace's contracts with debtors were often unwitnessed, whereas similar contracts in the private sector, including Šilwa-Teššup's household, were regularly witnessed and sealed by the witnesses (cf. p. 357). Similarly in Assyria, there is a clear difference between records serving the internal needs of an organisation and documents regulating its external transactions as attested in the Stewards' Archive or the Offerings House at Aššur, whose loans to its own personnel were drafted like public legal documents but did not usually require witnesses. In both cases relative informality bespeaks a close relationship between the institution and the other party, perhaps sometimes or always because they were regular members of staff.

Turning from bilateral to unilateral documents, in the household of Prince Šilwa-Teššup records of disbursed commodities were certainly at times drawn up for the organisation's internal monitoring (rather than to supply proof of the discharge of liability): as Morrison notes, “Most commonly, personal names are omitted and replaced by summaries of distributions to groups of people identified by occupation or status” (1979, 4). In general, though, the Nuzi archives do not include much evidence for the monitoring practices we observe in Assyria in the Aššur Temple or in the provinces, and it may not be by chance that we do not meet the terms *ašāru* “to check, take stock” and *māšartu* “stock-taking” at Nuzi. Except for the herding texts, where a record of the past year is used to establish future liability, there is nothing known to me from Nuzi which matches the methodicality of the Middle Assyrian annual statements, such as the crop and flock reports from provincial Durkatlimmu or the

¹⁵⁰ See p. 370. The colourful penalty of banging a copper peg into an offender's mouth (GIŠ.GAG ša URUDU *ana pi-šu imaḥḥašu*) may be an indicator of Babylonian or at least Kassite influence as its Nuzi occurrences mostly involve people with Kassite names, and outside Nuzi it reappears only in Middle Babylonian documents from Ur (and not e.g. Assyria; Millard 1981, 434–5 and 438; Fadhil 1981, 375–6).

¹⁵¹ See Deller 1981; Van der Toorn 1996, 222–3; Grosz 1988, 34, 36.

tabulated accounts from the Aššur Temple offerings regime. “Accounts” (*nikkassē*) are indeed mentioned, but perhaps significantly these are bilateral documents deriving from long-term business relations with a merchant, not in an administrative context.¹⁵²

Taken altogether, the differences in administrative documentation are perhaps more apparent than real, as in the legal sector. By comparison with administrative practices beyond Assyria’s western frontier, Nuzi appears rather similar in its usage of written documents in both state and private administration and in the degree of bureaucratic control this reflects.

Sealing

In Assyria, tablets recording formal bilateral transactions between two parties were sealed by the seller or debtor and by the witnesses. Court judgements would also be sealed by the judges involved. The sealing practices at Nuzi were similar, with private bilateral transactions sealed both by the seller or debtor and by the obligatory witnesses, and their seal impressions identified by captions. One clear distinction does however appear in the positioning of seals on a tablet. Whereas at Nuzi, in conformity with contemporary Babylonian practice, both one of the principals and the witnesses sealed at the end of the text on the reverse (cf. [Figure 7.4](#)), in Assyria the seller or debtor sealed in a space at the top of the obverse, with the seal caption inserted above the space before the first line of text proper.

Similarly at Nuzi, within an administrative organisation, personnel accepting a liability would seal the tablet on which it was recorded, usually adding the caption identifying them as the seal owner: we may view these as informal bilateral documents, of a kind which in Assyria would regularly include the provision that “he may break his tablet” when the liability was discharged.¹⁵³ Being internal to the organisation, they did not require witnesses, and names were regularly given without patronymics because the persons involved were well known. This applies equally to shepherds, who although not present for much of the year, had an abiding relationship with the palace or the owner: they too sealed the annual consignment tablets which did not require witnessing, and a special system had been developed using stone counters and a sealed bulla to allow the shepherds to see their liability in a form they could control. In Šilwa-Teššup’s house, although a clear distinction was maintained from the royal palace, much of the documentation follows the same pattern, with sealed but unwitnessed bilateral documents regulating liabilities within the organisation, and unsealed unilateral lists of rations and personnel. Although Nuzi does not know the technical term *kiširtu* which the Assyrian scribes used for a case-tablet, a few administrative texts may have been enclosed in envelopes to allow a usually captionless seal impression to record the assent or authorisation of a third party. In some cases an apparently purely unilateral record might be endorsed by one or more authorising or confirming persons (see p. 363).

¹⁵² See CAD N/ii, 227b for the phrase *nikkassamumma epēšu* “to do accounts” (with PN), which is found in bilateral commercial contexts.

¹⁵³ As in Assyria, the “breaking” of tablets which are no longer valid is attested not only in administrative but also in legal situations. Compare the clause “and as for the old tablets, this tablet has invalidated (lit. “broken”) them (*ù tup-pa-tum la-bi-ru-ti / tup-pu an-nu-ú uḫ-te-pí-šú-nu-ti*)”, Grosz 1988, 206 Gadd 10:29’-30’.

A similar practice which gives the sealing of the document a dispositive or at least an evidentiary value of its own, independent of the written text, can be recognised occasionally in Assyria, as a “watermark” on a tablet (at Tell Chuera, pp. 291–2), and it may indeed reflect an administrative tradition independent of the legal sector which, as the next chapter will show, has an echo at Alalāḥ and Ugarit.

8.1. Alalāḥ

Introduction

For some part of the 15th century BC the city of Aššur had found itself, like Nuzi, one of the Mittanian king's easternmost vassals, while at the other end of the Mittanian realm were the neighbouring states of Ugarit and Alalāḥ. For most of the second millennium BC Alalāḥ must have been the principal urban centre in the Amq, a fertile alluvial plain formed by the River Orontes before it breaks through the Amanus range westwards to flow into the north-east corner of the Mediterranean. A dynasty established at the city by Idrimi in the 15th century controlled from the capital a territory known as Mukīš, which included a number of population centres. While the kingdom must have been centred in the Amq plain, at times at least its territory extended west to the Mediterranean and bordered on Kizzuwatna (roughly = Cilicia) to the north, Aleppo to the east and Tunip and Ugarit to the south-east and south-west (see [Figures 8.1](#) and [8.3](#)). Its extent was therefore in the order of 75 by 150 kilometres, and in the 15th century Alalāḥ was a significant player in the regional politics of Syria.¹

The city itself became the mound of Tell Atchana (now Aḩana), and was excavated by Woolley before and after the Second World War. Two strata each yielded a considerable body of cuneiform texts, "Middle Babylonian" from Level IV, late second millennium, and "Old Babylonian" from Level VII, early second millennium.² The Level IV texts can be assigned to the 15th to 14th centuries BC, starting while the city was under Mittanian domination, but mostly dating to the time of Niqmepa, the son of Idrimi. He was succeeded by his son Ilim-ilimma, and during or shortly after his reign, from which time only a handful of tablets were recovered, the city must have been affected by the campaign of Suppiluliuma against Aleppo. Hence the entire Level IV corpus significantly predates the Assyrian westward expansion during the 13th century, so that any similarities detectable in the documentation are more likely the result of a shared heritage from the time when Mittani dominated all northern Mesopotamia and the Aleppo region as far as the Mediterranean, rather than of any direct cross-border influences between Assyria and the territories west of the Euphrates.

¹ This sentence is in effect a drastic abbreviation of von Dassow 2008, 64–7 and appendix III, 503–14.

² A thorough analysis of the provenances of these tablets is given by von Dassow 2005, and a comprehensive survey of the entire corpus of 606 Middle Babylonian texts from the city by Niedorf 2008. In this section the tablets are cited both by their ALT numbers (as initially assigned in Wiseman 1953) and by the numbering adopted in Niedorf 2008, which has been placed in square brackets.



Figure 8.1. The Near East in the 14th to 13th centuries BC.

The Provenances

An admirably thorough reconstruction of the provenances of the Level IV tablets, which has done much to clear away the doubts and uncertainties resulting from less than ideal recording and labelling of individual tablets from the Atchana excavations, is presented in von Dassow (2005). As shown in her plan (Figure 8.2), the great majority of the tablets from this time came either from the large palace building with more than 30 rooms, or from the complex known as the Fortress, immediately adjacent to the west.³ The tablets were quite widely scattered, and it is difficult to be sure to what extent their provenances reflect their location when the buildings were last in use, but the principal source of administrative documents

³ On the dating and stratigraphy of the Fortress see Fink 2010, with conclusions broadly accepted in von Dassow 2010, 52 footnote 31.

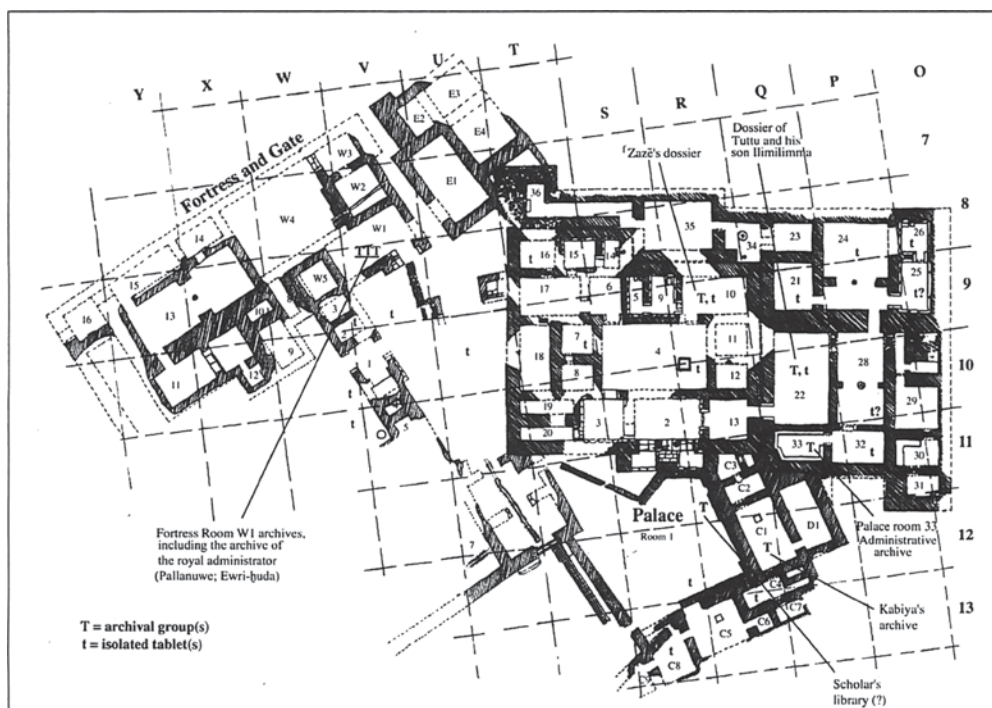


Figure 8.2. Alalah Level IV, the palace and “fortress” as exposed by Woolley’s excavations. © E. von Dassow.

was Room W1 in the Fortress (von Dassow 2005, 20–2, 43–6), and it seems probable that they had been stored there.

They included the majority of the census lists of persons and households, as well as texts dealing with copper and tin and with the manufacture and repair of weaponry; only four of the tablets from here were strictly legal documents.⁴ A few other smaller groups of tablets came from different parts of the palace. From Room 33, part of a later eastern annex perhaps added to Idrimi’s original structure by Niqmepa (von Dassow 2005, 23), a total of 43 tablets covered a variety of purely administrative matters including people, livestock, grain, wine, metals, fields and military equipment. Off the other side of the central courtyard to the north 23 tablets may have fallen into Room 10 from an upper storey. Some of these seem to concern the private affairs of an evidently high-ranking lady called Zaze who had a number of carpenters in her employ (von Dassow 2005, 24; 2008, 46), the others are very varied in content and origin. The only other clearly meaningful group is the batch of 13 tablets from Room 22 to the east of the courtyard: these included nine legal documents mostly concerned with the affairs of Tutu and especially his son Ilim-ilimma, who happens to bear the same name as Niqmepa’s successor on the throne of Alalah.⁵

⁴ See Niedorf 2008, 127; three of these were purchase documents of Ewri-ḥuda, and the fourth was ALT 51 [352.6]. Another text from here mentioning Ewri-ḥuda is at least quasi-legal, and classified by Niedorf with his Aktenvermerke (ALT 89 [38.1]).

⁵ These texts were studied by Bunnens 1978.

The Content and Format of the Legal Documents

At Alalah, as elsewhere in the ancient Near East, modern scholars have tended to distinguish broadly between legal and administrative documents, and the Alalah tablets include some of each. In his recent work devoted to the Alalah legal documents, Niedorf classifies the Level IV texts as letters and messages, legal documents and lists and administrative notes, but he was primarily concerned with the 49 documents he classifies as legal, of which he offers a comprehensive edition.⁶ Although it is the administrative documentation which concerns us more, a look at the format of legal texts will serve to highlight some of the differences in scribal practice between Aššur and Alalah. Moreover, the legal texts give us an insight into one aspect of the king's relationship to his subjects: whereas at Aššur we have recovered nothing from the output of the scribes who must have worked in the palace closest to the king, in the archives from Alalah the king's presence is very apparent.

To begin with here is an Alalah legal text which displays characteristic features:

(seal of Abban)	
<i>iš-tu UD-m[i a]n-ni-im</i>	From this day
<i>a-na pa-ni ¹niq-me-pa</i>	in the presence of Niqmepa
<i>¹tu-ut-tu</i>	Tuttu
<i>munus^{te}-su-ki</i>	(and) Tesuki
⁵ <i>KI ¹šu-ma-ad-di DUMU a-ki-te</i>	from Šumaddi son of Akite (and)
<i>KI ¹ta-ku-zi DUMU// na-mi-na</i>	from Takuzi son of Namina,
<i>LÚ.MEŠ^{ur} har-be</i>	men of Harbu,
<i>2 GU₄-pu 7 li-im URUDU.Ḫ[I.A]</i>	have taken 2 oxen (for) 7000 (shekels) copper.
<i>ŠU BA.AN.TI ši-im</i>	He (the purchaser) has paid the price and is quit.
¹⁰ <i>a-pil za-ku</i>	
<i>šum-ma ur-ra še-ra</i>	If in the future
<i>be-lam i-ra-aš-ši</i>	it (proves to) have a (previous) owner
<i>šu-ut-ma ú-za-ak-ki-i</i>	he himself will clear it of claims.
(4 witnesses)	
<i>IGI ¹aš-ri-ia LÚ.DUB.SAR</i>	Before Ašriya, the scribe.
²⁰ <i>NA₄.KIŠIB ¹niq-me-pa LUGAL</i>	Seal of Niqmepa, the king.
<i>IGI bal-la-nu-we</i>	Before Ballanuwe.

ALT 74 [Niedorf 342.3]

The first thing to note is the seal impression at the top of the obverse, with the caption belonging to it which has in this instance been positioned on the left edge. Of all the legal documents only two very laconic debt-notes (ALT 393 and 408 [351.3–4]) certainly had no seal impressed on them, the majority being sealed, usually only with a single seal bearing an inscription naming a king.⁷ The remarkable thing about the seal in this instance is that it is

⁶ Niedorf addresses the definition and attributes of “legal” (Rechtsurkunden) as opposed to “administrative” (Verwaltungsurkunden) records in the context of Alalah. He notes that both legal and administrative documents may be sealed, whereas the presence of witnesses is confined to legal texts and constitutes their prime marker. Note that within the category of “legal” he also includes business documents (Geschäftsurkunden) (2008, 123–4).

⁷ For the seals and the details of their usage see Collon 1975, 169–71.

not Niqmepa's own seal but that of an ancestor, or at least a predecessor. While Kings Idrimi and Ilim-ilimma tend to use their own seal, Idrimi's son Niqmepa prefers the seal of Abban, although on two occasions he uses his father Idrimi's seal. When and where Abban ruled is not known to us, and no other king is known to have used the Abban seal.⁸ The practice of using the seal of an earlier member of a dynasty is paralleled in the Alalah corpus by the two texts sealed by the Mittanian king Saustatar using his predecessor Šuttarna's seal, and at other cities within the confines of the Mittanian empire such as Ugarit and Emar.⁹ Why the documents were sealed by the king remains obscure: in some cases, such as the disposal of land titles, it seems possible that the king was directly involved in the transaction, but the majority of tablets seem to involve two individuals as principals, with the king there to authenticate the transaction.

Only rarely is the tablet sealed by a non-royal personage. One of these is Irkabtu, who sealed ALT 50 [352.5], and is attested elsewhere in the reign of Niqmepa as a high official, possibly a member of the royal family.¹⁰ His activities are described later in this chapter (pp. 392–4). Here he was no doubt acting on Niqmepa's behalf, as “the king” is mentioned as the creditor in this advance of silver. On the other hand the owner of the seal impressed on ALT 105 [352.7] is a man called Arad-Kubi who is probably taking out a loan of copper, in which case this tablet conforms to normal Mesopotamian practice with the debtor sealing. Exceptional also is ALT 51 [352.6], where the seal impression on the top of the obverse stands above a caption attributing it to “the GÌR official, the scribe”, while there are impressions of three other seals, each with its own caption, on the base of the reverse and the left edge (Collon 1975, 173), probably belonging to witnesses named in the break.¹¹ These few instances should remind us that all the Alalah tablets we have were found in the royal palace or adjacent fortress, whereas there may have been different practices in operation further afield.

Returning to ALT 74, there now follows a clause which states that the transaction recorded in the document will take effect “from this day forth”, a clause dubbed in German the *Inkraftsetzungsvermerk* or “activation statement”. This is frequent in the Alalah legal texts (see the table Niedorf 2008, 25–6). The slightly puzzling aspect of it, viewed from Assyria, is that the document has no date of any kind, but perhaps that did not matter. Next is the phrase “in the presence of Niqmepa”; he is of course the king, as stated in the seal caption, and many of the legal documents add “the king” at this point. The majority of all Alalah legal texts have this statement,¹² and it is tempting to understand it literally to mean that the transaction took place before the king, given that it is usually accompanied by an impression of a royal seal. This involvement of the king in the Alalah legal documents is paralleled at Ugarit, although

⁸ See Niedorf 2008, 267 and 335–6.

⁹ Niedorf 2008, 241; Boyer 1955, 285 suggested that the use of dynastic seals at Ugarit was intended to confer legitimacy to the transaction enduring beyond the lifetime of the individual king, and this idea has since been echoed by others (cf. Lackenbacher 2000, 166).

¹⁰ Collon 1975, 101–2, No. 192; Niedorf 2008, 380.

¹¹ So Niedorf 2008, 382, 386.

¹² See the table in Niedorf 2008, 125–6 *Angabe der Publizit(ätsform)*, and 140–1. Both *ina pāni* and *ana pāni* are used, and it is not obvious that there is any difference.

there, as noted by Niedorf, the seal caption is placed at the end of the text before the name of the scribe.¹³

There then follows the operative section of the transaction. Here it records that the purchaser has paid a sum of copper to buy an ox, but it may take various forms and is not as standardised as in some Mesopotamian legal traditions. The documents cover a wide range of transactions: records of judgements (Prozessurkunden), wills, marriage contracts, sale documents and debt documents (including debt-notes, loans and security). These are discussed in detail in Niedorf (2008).¹⁴ It can be broadly asserted that both Alalah and Ugarit make use of Babylonian terminology for their legal documents, but use very different formats from, and are much less standardised than, traditional Mesopotamian practice. Only very occasionally in the Alalah texts, which are earlier than those from Ugarit and Emar, do we come across clear Assyrianisms,¹⁵ and as with the other components of the legal documents there seems to be minimal Assyrian influence on the vocabulary or formulation of the essential part of the transaction.

Finally, the scribe lists the witnesses, usually present in Alalah legal documents as in Assyria, although here they do not seal the tablet (except perhaps for ALT 51). Like ALT 74, most documents have four or more witnesses, the last one usually identified as the scribe. The document ALT 87 [32.1] is unusual in having as many as 11 witnesses; this may be because neighbouring property owners needed to be involved. Not all transactions were witnessed: of the 49 legal texts listed in Niedorf at least 9 lacked witnesses (2008, 126–7). These include the two tablets sealed by the Mittanian overlord Saustatar (ALT 13–14 [31.1–2]), self-evidently a special case and probably not even written at Alalah, and four short memoranda of debts (ALT 81; 344; 393; 408 [351.1–4]). ALT 50 [352.5] is also a note of debt owed to the king, while the remaining two (ALT 82–83 [353.1–2]) are both notes of the entry into a house of a person standing as security (ŠU.DU₈.A = *qāt(āt)u*). Before leaving ALT 74, it is worth noting that a fifth witness by the name of Ballanuwe was listed on the left edge of the tablet, under the seal caption. Because he held an important post in the administration, as will shortly become apparent, it is likely that this positioning of the name reflects the fact that he is not a regular witness, but present in a formal or informal supervisory capacity.

Virtually all the legal texts appear concerned with the personal affairs of the principals involved and not with state administration. The question therefore arises why private records were stored in these public buildings when they were destroyed or abandoned. The same issue arises at Ugarit, where seemingly private documents were recovered from the palace (p. 400; Niedorf 2008, 130⁴⁸⁹), and at other times and places in the Near East, including Tell Billa, Tell al-Rimah and not least Nuzi, apparently private documents are found in public contexts or documents from state administration end up in apparently private houses. At

¹³ “Wie in Alalah IV findet sich häufig auch der Angabe der Publizitätsform *ana pāni* KN LUGAL. Anders als in Alalah IV ist der Siegelvermerk aber ganz unten, vor der den Text anschließenden Nennung des Schreibers angebracht” (Niedorf 2008, 136⁵²⁷).

¹⁴ Previous work included Kienast’s study of the sale documents at Alalah and Ugarit (Kienast 1976–80) and Márquez Rowe’s contribution to Westbrook (ed.) 2003 (pp. 703–16).

¹⁵ Noted by Niedorf 2008, 107.

Alalah, opinions are divided about the possible reasons.¹⁶ On one hand, it could be that some officials employed by and physically working within the premises of the palace kept documents concerning their private affairs there, while on the other hand it has been suggested that the state at Alalah had a technical interest in the transactions and accordingly retained a copy for its archives.¹⁷ One can easily imagine that this could have been the case for transactions concerning social status or land tenure where the monarchy could have been directly involved, but it is harder to envisage a situation in which the palace would have retained a significant interest in loan transactions formulated as between individual citizens, even though they are said to be transacted in the presence of the king and sealed by him. In the case of the palace and the Fortress at Alalah, which surely functioned as a seat of government as well as a royal residence, it is noticeable that a fair number of the private documents derive from persons known to have had senior roles in the administration (see later in this chapter on Irkabtu or Ewri-huda) or were close to the royal family,¹⁸ so that it would not be surprising if they were physically present (though they and their families can hardly all have been permanently resident) in the palace.

When all is said and done, we have of course to bear in mind that we are probably looking at documents which were no longer actively used at the time the buildings were destroyed and abandoned. There are cases where documents which clearly belonged together originally were found in different parts of the complex, and as with almost all archives one has the strong sensation that much more has been lost than has survived. Indeed, von Dassow has made a plausible case for concluding that the tablets found in the Alalah palace complex had been long since neglected, because the administrative capital had moved away from Alalah altogether. This is an attractive but hardly provable idea, and it is certainly salutary to bear in mind the role that the sheer accidents of preservation and destruction must have played in the distribution and composition of the archives Woolley found as he excavated.

The Content and Format of the Administrative Documents

The legal texts just discussed are less than 10 per cent of the total number of tablets recovered, and some of the groups of administrative texts offer detailed insights into aspects of the economy and in particular of the social order. It is not the intention here to describe the entire corpus, but rather to concentrate on aspects of it which reflect the use made of written documents by officials in the fulfilment of their duties, and specifically, to ask whether documents appear to be exclusively unilateral records intended to supply the administrators with facts and figures, or might also have a bilateral dispositive force, and thus have been used as in Assyria to regulate the relations between different members of the administration.

One salient feature of the Alalah documentation is the presence of sets of tablets containing lists which are similar in presentation and content. Thus there is broad agreement among

¹⁶ See Niedorf 2008, 129–33, where the possible options are reviewed.

¹⁷ So most recently von Dassow 2010.

¹⁸ See Niedorf 2008, 130 on Ilim-ilimma in particular.

editors and commentators that we can identify several different types of census lists or registers of the population: there are lists of men resident in certain towns, of households located in certain towns, of landholders and their landholdings and of troops with a specific military function.¹⁹ Some of these lists assign the people to different social classes (see Dietrich & Loretz 1969–70; Niedorf 2008, 66–9), and have been used to reconstruct the structure of Alalah society in much the same way as at Nuzi.²⁰ The texts from room W1 in the Fortress also included lists of contributions from individuals or towns in the shape of sheep and goats, while other records list copper and tin (ALT 397–9, 402–3, 405) or deal with the manufacture and repair of weaponry (ALT 422, 425–6). As far as we can tell, this documentation applies to the entire territory of the state, for which the central administration appears to be directly responsible. There is no clear sign of provinces or provincial governors at Alalah, and this is reminiscent of Ugarit, where van Soldt, while recognising groups of toponyms in the administrative documents, is not inclined to elevate these to the status of a province (see p. 408).

Such documents evidently reflect the efforts of government administrators to maintain records of the human and material resources of their kingdom for the purposes of the military and perhaps also civilian administration. The similarities between the presentation and content of some of the individual tablets make it clear that they belonged together and therefore that the composition of the W1 archive is not totally random. However, none of the sets of lists appears complete, and the precise occasions on which lists of this sort were drawn up at Alalah are lost to us because the administrative style there is much more laconic than later in Assyria. Scribes are much less likely to use verbal forms or complete sentences to tell us the circumstances or purpose of a list, and the texts therefore look very much like unilateral aides-mémoire, the rationale of which is held in the heads of those involved.²¹ They often, however, have formal headings which are usefully informative. So ALT 209, one of a group of texts recording landholdings, has the heading “Tablet of the vine(yards) of the town of Šaḥe”,²² while the frequent census lists also normally have a heading. Examples include “Town of Alime – *ḥupše* men”, “Town of Kallazu – *namû* men”²³ and “Tablet of the *mariyannu* men (with) chariots” (ALT 128 [414.1]). Headings of this sort are rare in the Middle Assyrian tablets, and in fact from Assyria we possess very few lists with this sort of comprehensive coverage.²⁴ One reason for this is possibly that they did exist but were kept on writing-boards: we know for sure that lists of personnel to be conscripted into state service were permanently maintained on such boards and that boards were used in the organisation of state-controlled

¹⁹ Von Dassow 2005, 9; Niedorf 2008, 52–66.

²⁰ For example Dosch 2009; and more substantively von Dassow 2008.

²¹ In this respect they resemble Aegean practices as exemplified by the Linear B documents (and no doubt even more so by the Linear A texts if we could read them).

²² *tup-pu* GIŠ.GEŠTIN ^{ur}ša-ah-e, ALT 209 [42.3]; several similar tablets have similar headings, cf. Table 3.6 in von Dassow 2008, 188.

²³ ALT 131 and 132 [413.3–4]; see von Dassow 2008, 136.

²⁴ One of the rare Middle Assyrian long lists of personnel is MARV 2.1, divided into ruled sections with short summaries at the end of each section (e.g. ŠU PN “in the charge of PN”, or ÉRIN.MEŠ LUGAL “king’s troops”), but no explanatory heading of any kind.

textile production.²⁵ Another reason is of course that we do not have the relevant archives, only scattered texts from the palace's military administration at Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta.

Another difference from Assyria is that at Alalah we have no debt-notes, in which individuals charged with a liability (such as a work contract) acknowledge it by sealing a tablet, nor are there any sealed receipts confirming that a liability had been fulfilled, and indeed there do not appear to be any envelopes at all. At first sight it appears therefore that the palace administration at Alalah did not make use of bilateral instruments. The reasons for this are uncertain, but it is conceivable that unlike Assyria or Arraphē, the land of Mukiš outside the palace itself was effectively or largely illiterate, so that there was no commercial model for the palace scribes to adopt from society. However, since no excavation has taken place in contemporary villages, and very little elsewhere on the mound at Tell Atchana itself, this is a dangerous *argumentum ex silentio*.

Even though patently bilateral documents are absent, some of the administrative tablets do bear seal impressions, suggesting that they may have had a more active role in the administrative process.²⁶ Unfortunately, the content of the tablets in question does not yield many clues to what this role might have been. The lists were produced for internal consumption, and the scribes apparently saw no need to name the officials involved in their preparation or consultation, so that even if we could guess the role in the transaction of the person whose seal was rolled across the clay, we would still not know his or her name. Moreover, only a few seals can be recognised on more than a few tablets, but – perhaps not coincidentally – these also tend to be inscribed, so that their original owner (though not necessarily the current user, cf. Niqmepa's use of the seal of Abban) can be identified.²⁷ Of these seal owners the most interesting for us is Irkabtu, and the implications of his seal impressions on some of these tablets will be considered after looking at two other officials of whom something is known.

Two Accountants

Only a few members of the administrative personnel can be identified in any depth, and here attention will concentrate on just three. Individuals may become known to us in any combination of four ways: by being a principal in a legal document, by being a witness to someone else's legal document, by being named in an administrative text or letter and by impressing his seal on a tablet. The fact that some of the persons mentioned in administrative texts reappear as witnesses to legal documents sealed by the king tends to suggest that they were habitually at hand in the palace environment, while we have already considered alternative explanations for the presence of their personal legal documents in the palace area.

²⁵ See p. 64.

²⁶ The seal impressions on the Level IV tablets are presented in Collon 1975, 98–138, seal numbers 188–237.

²⁷ The principal examples of such inscribed seals used more than once are usually on legal documents: Collon Nos. 189 (Idrimi, the king himself), 192 (Irkabtu), 193 (Ilim-ilimma, not the king), 219 ([PN], servant of Niqmepa) and 228 (Tirisra, only on three letters).

Only rarely do the scribes help us by stating a person's official or professional role, but two such cases are Ballanuwe and Ewri-ḥuda, who are both given the title *šatam šarri*, "the king's accountant".²⁸ In Old Babylonian contexts the *šatammu* has a particular responsibility for accounting, and the title is also attested at Ugarit, but this does not tell us much about this official's actual functions. Ballanuwe is twice encountered acting as witness to documents sealed by the king (AIT 74 [342.3] sealed by Niqmepa; 100 [38.3], sealed by Idrimi), which tends to confirm the impression that he would have been active in the royal precincts, and the archives contained at least two letters addressed to him, one concerned with bronze vessels, weapons and wooden furniture (AIT 113 [2.10]), the other too fragmentary for the subject to be known. He is also listed in census tablets (AIT 169 [411.3], text unpublished; AIT 198 [412.14; Dietrich & Loretz 1970, 99–100]), and appears as an owner (or possibly administrator) of land in AIT 212 [42.6] and 218 [42.11], and as one of a few prominent persons receiving 10 sheep (AIT 353 [44.15]) – all of which fits with the picture of him as intimately engaged in the centre of royal administration.

A successor in office to Ballanuwe was Ewri-ḥuda, who is also described as a "son of the palace" in AIT 129 [413.1] and a "man of the palace" in AIT 89 [38.1]. In AIT 72 [342.1] he purchases an ox and is given the title "royal accountant" (*šatam šarri*), and this is one of five documents of his which were the only legal texts found in Room W1 in the Fortress. The others also seem to relate to his activities as a private individual: the purchase of a man (AIT 68 [341.3]), of a woman (AIT 67 [341.2]) and of a man and a woman (AIT 89 [38.1]); the latest document of his is AIT 85 [353.4], a pledge text sealed by Ilim-ilimma as king.²⁹ Unless we subscribe to the idea that these legal documents are in this public archive because the state had an interest in the transactions, it seems reasonable to conclude, as does Niedorf (2008, 308), that in Ewri-ḥuda's time the royal *šatammu* was still active in this part of the government buildings, and that his private documents were kept there alongside administrative documentation for which he was responsible.³⁰ However, few administrative tablets mention him by name: in the census list AIT 129 [413.1] he is listed as the "employer" of a member of the *eḫele* class, in AIT 394 [47.3] he is involved with amounts of silver and in AIT 420 [46.4] with wooden furniture. If he was more active than this suggests, it may be that many of the documents for which he was responsible did not use his name, but simply relied on the impression of his seal. Unfortunately, we do not know which of the impressions recorded by Collon (1975) might have been his, because none of them has his name incised on the seal itself, and the Alalah scribes do not generally use captions in their administrative texts. As a result, apart from noting that like his predecessor he features in the surviving documentation, both in his official capacity and as an individual, there is little to be said about his function within government.

²⁸ For the social standing of these two individuals, as well as Irkabtu, none of whom are said to have been *marianu*, see von Dassow 2008, 281–2.

²⁹ For the legal tablets mentioning him see von Dassow 2010, 52 footnote 28; AIT 89 [38.1] is also effectively legal (classified by Niedorf as an Aktenvermerk), and AIT 394 [47.3] is administrative. All these and AIT 129 come from W1, while AIT 420 is from Room 33 in the palace.

³⁰ On Ewri-ḥuda's activities see also von Dassow 2008, 147.

Irkabtu

By contrast, Irkabtu the third official, did have his name on his seal, and we can therefore detect his presence even when the text on a tablet makes no mention of him. If we examine the 11 tablets onto which Irkabtu's seal was rolled, it is clear that he must have engaged in the management of essential data for the state about its subjects and their activities (see Table 8.1). Unfortunately, when other tablets mention him he is never given a title, but he appears as a witness on 12 documents with the royal seal, once alongside Ballanuwe (ALT 74), and on 7 occasions he is the first-named witness.³¹ It is therefore quite likely that he was highly placed at court under Niqmepa, and we can reconstruct some of his responsibilities from the tablets bearing his seal.³²

A first point to note is that, unlike the legal tablets where the royal seal is usually rolled across the top of the obverse, here there is a preference for impressing the seal on the back of the tablet below the cuneiform text, and this may directly reflect a difference in the function of the sealing in the two situations. Of the tablets with Irkabtu's seal in the table, ALT 145 and 179 are very similar two-column tablets, which have been recognised as belonging to a set of lists recording bowmen from different towns.³³ ALT 220, listing chariot-makers in different towns, ALT 402, mentioning inter alia copper for a large number of arrows; ALT 422 and 425 listing chariots and the three tablets listing horses also indicate Irkabtu's involvement in military affairs, as horses and chariots were an exclusively military phenomenon. Other tablets he sealed (ALT 164, 231) deal with a variety of people. Yet ALT 390 shows Irkabtu engaged in a quite different branch of state business, involving vessels and other items in precious metal evidently the property of the state. So while von Dassow's description of him as "a prominent official with responsibilities for the army" (2008, 147) is patently correct, he may also have had oversight over a wider range of state affairs, both military and civilian.

However, it is his sealings on the uniformly presented lists of bowmen and on the horse lists which interest us in particular here. Since his name and office are not mentioned, we can only guess why his seal was used on these documents. Their nature is often stated by the scribe in a formal heading at the beginning of the text, such as "Bow-[troops] (of) the town of Puhiya, man of the town of Zalakiya" (ALT 179; 145 similar), "Tablet of 1-year-old horses" (*tup-pí* ANŠE.KUR.RA.ḪI.A MU.DILI, ALT 329) and "Chariot-carpenters" (ALT 220). To judge from such headings, they mostly appear to be intended as a definitive record of the existence and location of military resources, whether these were men, horses or equipment. It is clear that he is not sealing because he is selling or borrowing them, rather this use of the seal is more likely to be expressing his ratification or authorisation of the contents of the lists. In Assyria we have noted cases of ratification and of authorisation, where in both cases the application of the seal provides confirmation that the seal owner has approved the content of the tablet, and hence of any consequential actions which flow from it, such as the issue of

³¹ See under his name in the index to Niedorf 2008, 489 (first witness in 341.1; 341.3; 342.1; 352.1; 352.2; 353.4; 36.2).

³² He witnesses the purchase of an ox ALT 72 [342.1] by Ewri-ḫuda, but if this was before Ewri-ḫuda's tenure of the post he could also have been *šatam šarri*.

³³ Niedorf 2008, 70–71; von Dassow 2002, 881–5; 2008, 200.

Table 8.1. *Tablets with impression of Irkabtu's seal*

ALT	Copy	Niedorf 2008	Cols.	Seal impression	Contents
145		70–1: 414.2	2	Right reverse	List of 107 bowmen under Patešeya
164		71–2: 414.4	1	Reverse	[PN] + profession (broken)
179		70–1: 414.5	2	L and R edges	List of 105 bowmen under Puḫiya
220		81: 415.15	1	Lower reverse	List of chariot carpenters from various towns
231	Pl. XXX	84–5: 416.6	1	Reverse	Note of male and female slaves
329	Pl. XXXV	98–9: 44.1	1	Lower reverse	List of pairs of horses and place names
330		99: 44.2	1	Lower reverse ²	List of pairs of horses and PNs
338a + 339	JCS 8, p. 26	99–100: 44.7	1	Reverse ²	List of pairs of horses and place names
390	Pl. XXXVIII	110: 47.1	1	Lower reverse	List of gold and silver items
402	Pl. XXXIX	112: 47.11	1	Lower reverse	Copper issued to smiths
422		108: 46.6		Lower reverse	Chariots issued to personnel
425	Pl. XLII	108–9: 46.8		Lower reverse	Chariots to carpenters

rations to the listed families at Tell Chuera. The situation here may be broadly similar, but there are no Middle Assyrian examples where the practice is applied to lists of personnel. At Nuzi, however, there does seem to be one closely comparable case, and that is a group of military rosters drawn up at the capital Arraphē itself. Eight of these documents have been re-assembled by von Dassow from the different museums to which the antiquities market dispersed them, so we do not know precisely where in the capital they were stored. That they belong together is, however, clear: most are introduced with a heading, such as “Tablet of the men who were released to (go to) their homes, of the town of Tarbašhe”, and each one has the impressions of the seals of both Teḫip-šarri and Akip-tašenni, rolled across the clay before the cuneiform text was inscribed, more often on the reverse than the obverse.³⁴ Neither of these gentlemen is mentioned elsewhere in the texts, but their seals are identified, unlike Irkabtu's, by explicit captions.³⁵ Teḫip-šarri is not certainly known to us otherwise, but Akip-tašenni, son of Muš-Teššup, is attested at Nuzi, where on one occasion he acts as a judge in a case involving Prince Šilwa-Teššup.³⁶ As we might expect, then, he was probably high up in Arraphan society although Teḫip-šarri is usually placed before him. Thus we can say that these tablets were designed to provide the administration with necessary details about the conscription status of the men in question, together with the identities of the supervisory

³⁴ Von Dassow 2009, 619–20.

³⁵ For all this see the comprehensive treatment of von Dassow 2009.

³⁶ Von Dassow 2009, 620.

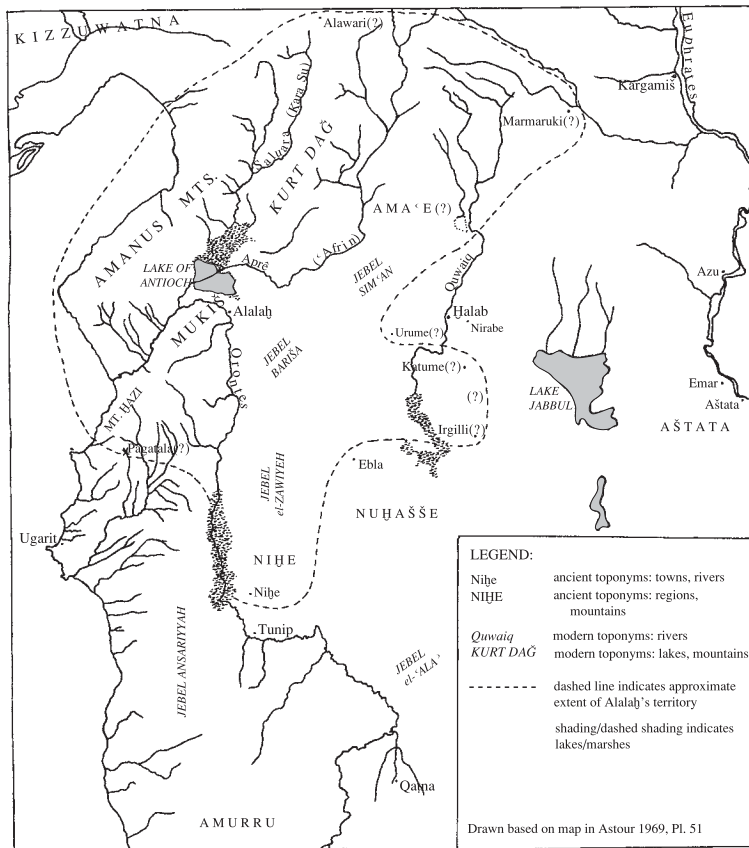


Figure 8.3. The territory of Alalah, approximate extent. © E. von Dassow.

officials who had authorised or vouched for their content. In the same way, it is reasonable to conclude that Irkabtu's seal confirmed that he vouched for the correctness of the information contained in each text. Perhaps when junior officials needed to recruit the men listed in the census tablets or round up the teams of horses from their villages, even if they did not actually take the tablets with them to display his sealing as they travelled around Mukiš, they would at least be relying upon its contents and would be able to refer to it as the list authorised by Irkabtu.

Conclusions

The language, formulation and often the content of the legal documents recovered from the palace and fortress at Alalah are significantly different from the Middle Assyrian legal documentation known to us from a century or more later. Particularly striking is the frequency with which apparently private transactions are recorded as taking place in the presence of the king and are sealed by or on behalf of the king himself (and not by one of the principals). Whether this is more prevalent in the available corpus because the transaction took place

within the ambit of the palace, and there would be less royal participation visible if we had documentation from other parts of the city or territory, remains open to discussion. It is also unresolved whether the involvement of the monarch in private legal documents was sufficiently substantive to account for their storage in the palace area, or was no more than a traditional formality. If the latter, their presence there is most easily accounted for by assuming that individuals employed by the palace stored their personal documentation there alongside any records relating to their official functions.

The majority of the palace archives are in any case so-called administrative texts, and appear to be predominantly unilateral lists and memoranda. They tend to be very laconic, leaving much to be supplied by readers who had the inside knowledge we cannot share. Nevertheless, the sets of census tablets are clearly the output of a serious attempt to systematise the government's information about the manpower at its disposal and other military resources. It seems clear that this information was held centrally at Alalakh for the entire country of Mukiš, without a provincial tier of administration. Since no contemporary rural settlements within the kingdom of Alalakh have been excavated, it is not known whether scribes functioned there, either inside or outside the government administration. At various towns across the Mitannian realm, isolated finds of royal deeds may well have been the only written documents present in an essentially illiterate society.³⁷

By contrast with Assyria, there is no sign that different sectors of the administration maintained ongoing accounts of their transactions or compiled annual statements, and at Alalakh it seems that the formulae and format of legal documents recording private liabilities were not borrowed from the private sector for use in the management of the administration. There were, however, occasional administrative tablets which bore a seal impression. Since the seal owners are not identified by captions, we are not usually in a position to judge whether the seal belongs to any of the persons mentioned in the text, or to a responsible official whose involvement in the document was marked solely by the impression of his seal. The best opportunity for observing this comes from the tablets bearing the inscribed seal of Irkabtu. It probably indicated his approval or authorisation of the contents of a tablet; this could obviously have different roles to play in different situations, about which one might speculate, but as a general procedure it does seem to fit the facts.

8.2. Ugarit (Ras Shamra)

The State, the City and the Site

During the later second millennium BC, Alalakh's neighbour on the west was another mini-state ruled from the port of Ugarit, in what was later to become Phoenicia, the rival of archaic Greece in the commercial world of the eastern Mediterranean. The city of Ugarit and its

³⁷ See von Dassow 2010, 46 on the tablets from Umm el-Marra east of Aleppo and Tell Bazi on the Euphrates: "The people of Bašīru, collectively, kept only these two tablets, signs of their rightful possession of the towns granted them by Mittani".

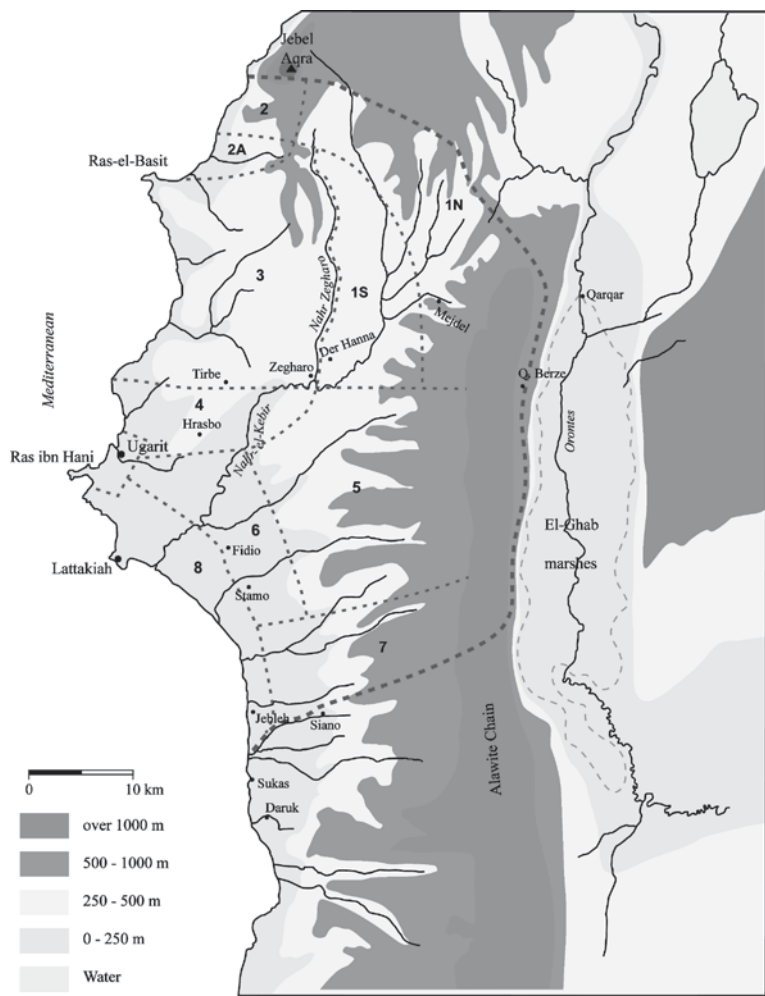


Figure 8.4. The territory of Ugarit © W. H. van Soldt.

palace were ransacked and abandoned at the end of the Bronze Age, some time early in the 12th century BC, but for more than two centuries before that it had been the capital of one of the minor kingdoms which occupied the sparring ground of north-western Syria tussled over by Egypt, Mittani and the Hittite kings. Vassals briefly of the Mittani kings in the 15th to 14th centuries, between about 1340 and 1330 BC, Ugarit like Alalah succumbed before the incursion of Suppiluliuma I, and from that time forth until it was finally destroyed in the general unrest of the early 12th century, the king of Ugarit owed allegiance to the Hittites, most directly to the cadet Hittite dynasty based at Carchemish, but ultimately to the “Great King” of the land of Hatti ruling from Hattusa (see maps, Figures 8.1 and 8.4). This relationship is spelled out in some of the international treaties recovered from the palace, and is also reflected in some of the diplomatic correspondence.

The ruins of the city (Figure 8.5) lie under the mound called Ras Shamra on the Syrian coast, about 10 kilometres north of the modern town of Latakiah, and the French



Figure 8.5. City of Ugarit with location of archives. © M. Yon. 1: House of Rap'anū; 2: House of Rašap-abū; 3: "Palais Sud": House of Yabni-šapšu; 4: Tablets of Urtenu. © M. Yon.

excavations, begun here in 1929 by C. F. A. Shaeffer and continuing to this day, have revealed a wealth of information about this Late Bronze Age port, its dependent countryside and its political and commercial relations.³⁸ The most significant result, which was immediately apparent, is still the recovery of the lost language now known as Ugaritic, cognate with other West Semitic languages including Aramaic and Phoenician, and written on clay tablets with an alphabet whose letters are made up of cuneiform wedges.

Languages and Scripts

While in political terms Nuzi and Alalah shared their membership of the Mittanian empire, on another level they also shared a strong ethnic and linguistic Hurrian component in their

³⁸ For a recent account of the excavation by one of its directors see Yon 2006. I would like to reiterate my deep gratitude to Wilfred van Soldt for reading an earlier draft of this chapter and contributing valuable improvements and corrections, without which I would not have ventured onto Ugaritic territory.

societies, as evidenced by the personal names, vocabulary and even the grammar of the ostensibly Akkadian documents they drafted. The same is also true of Ugarit, but there the situation is a good deal more complex. Ugarit, like the cities of Phoenicia which later assumed its mantle, was poised between the states on the West Asian mainland and the world of the eastern Mediterranean, mediating between Syria/Mesopotamia and the sea-reached cultures of Cyprus, the Anatolian seaboard, Crete, Pre-Hellenic Greece and Egypt. The resultant cultural amalgam is reflected in the archaeological record, especially in the range of Egyptian, Cypriot and Mycenaean objects recovered from the site, but is also vividly illustrated by the complexities of the written record. The clay tablets excavated in many parts of the palace and city are mostly written either in Babylonian cuneiform and dialect (with occasional traces of Assyrian influence), or in the local alphabet of 30 letters formed with cuneiform wedges, often referred to as “alphabetic cuneiform”. In addition we find Hurrian texts written both in alphabetic, like Ugaritic, and in syllabic cuneiform, like Akkadian, as well as occasional tablets with Cypro-Minoan script.³⁹ If there were ever Egyptian papyri, as one might expect, they have not survived, nor are there any surviving wooden writing-boards, which were certainly in use.⁴⁰ If there were also documents written in an early form of the linear West Semitic alphabets they too must have been on perishable materials, as none have survived either.

The cuneiform alphabet used at Ugarit is by far the best known such script in the Levant, but it is not unique, as examples of slightly variant cuneiform alphabets are known from a number of sites in western Syria and Palestine. There is a natural inclination to suppose that the Ugaritic version was invented first and then adopted and adapted elsewhere, but logically this is not a safe procedure, as the evidence from other places is so scrappy. In recent years a consensus has emerged that the script was only adopted in Ugarit during the 13th century,⁴¹ when Akkadian cuneiform had been in use at the city for some time, and it is obviously possible that the idea of an alphabet written with wedges for use on clay was conceived in some other scribal centre where traditional Babylonian cuneiform co-existed with a West Semitic alphabet using the linear characters which led to the Aramaic, Phoenician and ultimately Greek scripts.⁴²

Textual Content

Although both the main scripts were used occasionally to write Hurrian, it was a fixed rule that the alphabetic script was used for the indigenous Ugaritic language, and the genuine cuneiform for Akkadian (and Sumerian). The scribes of Ugarit must have been “biliterate”

³⁹ Two Cypro-Minoan tablets are reported, for instance, from Room 203 in the so-called Palais Sud (RS 19.01 and 19.02: van Soldt 1991, 150–1), and single tablets from around the House of Rap'anu (RS 20.25: van Soldt 1991, 177) and in the House of Rašap'abu (RS 17.06: van Soldt 1991, 160). For the Cypro-Minoan inscriptions John Bennet refers me to Ferrara 2012.

⁴⁰ For writing-boards in the Hittite world see Symington 1991; Waal 2011. At Ugarit itself note the folded boards depicted on a treaty stele (Figure 8.6); Symington notes mentions of a “tablet of wax” and a “(writing) board” in tablets from Ugarit, but carefully observes that the documents in question were written elsewhere (1991, 121–3).

⁴¹ So for instance Bordreuil & Pardee 2010, 2.

⁴² For a helpful recent survey of our current knowledge of cuneiform alphabets see Millard 2007.

because to a large degree the texts written in the two systems are complementary in terms of their content, with legal documents almost exclusively in Akkadian, but the local myths and epics in Ugaritic.⁴³ As expressed in more detail by Kienast, Ugaritic was used for the indigenous religious literature, for inland correspondence and for economic documents, while Akkadian was used for international written communications such as correspondence and treaties, but also for internal legal documentation.⁴⁴

Quite why one or the other script/language was preferred in specific contexts is not always clear to us, although it is obvious, for example, why the international documents were in Akkadian. In the case of the legal documents, many of which are royal deeds, similar documents are attested in the 14th century at Alalakh, and at Ugarit itself they go back in time a century and a half, well before the earliest demonstrable use of the Ugaritic script (Márquez Rowe 2006, 62). There may therefore have been a time when Akkadian cuneiform was the only vehicle for written documents at Ugarit, at least on clay, and insofar as the legal documents are concerned it is obvious that the Akkadian language and the cuneiform script were adopted by the Ugaritic establishment as a package, along with the whole legal framework.⁴⁵ There are, however, exceptions: of the 176 royal deeds listed by Márquez Rowe, six were written in alphabetic Ugaritic, and four of these had been sealed by the royal seal: “Márquez Rowe rightly remarked that at least the alphabetic texts from the Central Palace archive are not just translations of Akkadian originals, but that they were sealed with the royal seal and were therefore legally effective (2006, 55)” (van Soldt 2010, 152).

It is understandable that the greatest tendency for overlap is in the everyday administrative or economic texts, which are relatively informal. Quite similar administrative documents are found in one or the other language (and hence also script), and it is clear that they were used both side by side and overlapping.⁴⁶ Indeed, we get occasional tablets with text in both scripts, such as PRU 2.116 listing textiles, which has the obverse in alphabetic but the reverse in syllabic cuneiform (Nougayrol 1970), and PRU 5, No. 34 where Face A, introduced by “Tablet of oil” (*tup-pu* IĀ.MEŠ), is in Akkadian, but Face B appears to offer the same information in alphabetic Ugaritic. Other texts are predominantly in one language but have a total or other additional note in the other: PRU 5.58 is a long Ugaritic list of contributions payable by individuals and professional groups, ending with a total in Akkadian, while PRU 5.96 is a list of salt works drawn up in Akkadian but has its total given in both syllabic cuneiform and Ugaritic.⁴⁷

⁴³ Note for example that “Burqānu the scribe drew up at least three (private) deeds in Akkadian and one (also private) in his native language” (Márquez Rowe 2006, 55).

⁴⁴ Kienast 1979, 431.

⁴⁵ Expressed thus by Márquez Rowe: “it is precisely this long tradition, so closely linked to legal language and practice ... that accounts for the continuing viz. conservative use of Akkadian to draw up legal texts despite the invention of a simpler script to write the vernacular (Ugaritic), used for example for administrative notes and records” (2006, 56).

⁴⁶ One small example: of seventeen tablets from Room 73 in the Royal palace, six, including the only two Akkadian texts, were concerned with wine (Lackenbacher 2001, 82). For the provenance of the texts, van Soldt (1991) offers a comprehensive survey, which is the principal basis for more recent summaries such as Pedersén 1998, 68–80 or Lackenbacher 2001.

⁴⁷ For a detailed study of the various ways Mesopotamian cuneiform was used in documents from Ugarit, for example as logograms for Ugaritic words, see Roche 2008.

Distribution of Texts

The great wealth of written records from Ugarit has been recovered from numerous locations across the city. Some patently belonged to royal or state archives, with five major locations within the main royal palace; others come from the residences of individuals or perhaps rather of families. Because the language and script of the documents are to a large extent dictated by their content, it is unsurprising that the Ugaritic and Akkadian texts were not evenly distributed across the different find spots, and the assemblages or archives retrieved by the excavators tend to be either predominantly one or the other. Thus the administrative documentation of the “Palais Sud”, now identified as the residence of Yabni-Šapšu (Yabninu), the chief accountant (ŠA.TAM GAL), whose scribe, Naḥiš-šalmu, was Assyrian, is very largely in syllabic Akkadian, often with strong Assyrian influence on the palaeography and language,⁴⁸ whereas most of the economic texts of the royal palace are in general in alphabetic Ugaritic.⁴⁹

Apart from their script and language, the assemblages of tablets in different contexts also varied greatly both between and within each archive. The Akkadian texts from the house of Rap'anu, for instance, comprised more than 60 letters, mostly international, a few legal texts drawn up before witnesses (i.e. not before the king), including three land purchases made by the queen, a few literary and more than 200 lexical texts,⁵⁰ while in the House of Rašapabu ten legal documents were accompanied by four economic texts.⁵¹ The House of Urtenu, another leading citizen, had a range of Akkadian texts similar to Rap'anu's, including further international correspondence and documents dealing with the affairs of the queen.⁵² Lackenbacher speculates that the “House of Rap'anu” and the “House of Urtenu” may have been buildings assigned to the exercise of a particular office (“liés à l'exercice d'une fonction”, 1995, 75) rather than a family residence. In light of contemporary Assyrian practice, one suspects that it was not an either/or situation, but that a single household could accommodate both the personal and official activities of these elite citizens.

The distribution of texts within the royal palace is discussed fully by van Soldt (1991, 133–41).⁵³ Certain points stand out clearly: treaties and other international legal texts belong primarily in the South archive, while domestic legal texts, which include the so-called royal deeds, are preponderantly from the Central archive (archive C). International correspondence from the reign of Ammiṭtamru II was generally found in the Central archive (east wing), but from the reign of Ibiranu in the Eastern archive. Some of the texts from the Eastern archive strongly suggest that it was here that the governor (*sākinu*) of Ugarit had his office.⁵⁴ The West, East and South-West archives all yielded abundant economic or administrative texts,

⁴⁸ Van Soldt 2000, 230–1; 2001.

⁴⁹ So for example Courtois 1990, 119; Lackenbacher 2001, 84 notes that of the economic tablets in the “Palais Sud”, Akkadian texts outnumber Ugaritic ones by six to one, in contrast to the relative proportions in the royal palace.

⁵⁰ Lexical tablets amounted to 224 or 71 per cent of the total number of texts (cf. van Soldt 1991, 178).

⁵¹ Nougayrol 1968; these are Pedersén's archives Ugarit 13 and 14.

⁵² See Lackenbacher 1995.

⁵³ For a concise, up to date survey of the distribution of tablets across the city see van Soldt forthcoming.

⁵⁴ As proposed by van Soldt (2006, 693).

a large proportion of them Ugaritic, but they do not seem to have been sorted methodically into types within that broad category.⁵⁵

Text Genres

Nevertheless, there are clear categories to which most texts can be assigned. Although our concern here is mainly with written documents deriving from the practice of state administration, they need to be viewed against the background of the literate record as a whole, and a summary of this has to sort the tablets into categories by their content.

International Documents

One set of documents from Ugarit has understandably attracted a good deal of attention, namely the international treaties. These demonstrate that there was a collective recognition not only within the palatial societies of the Late Bronze Age, but also between them, that written documents could function as evidence of, if not actually instruments to create, binding agreements between states. It would take us too far to pursue this theme *in extenso*, but when it comes to documentary format, it is telling that the Egyptian version of the great treaty between Egypt and Hatti should give a painstaking physical description of the tablet which includes a description of the Hittite royal seal impressed upon it:

What is in the middle of the tablet of silver: On its front side: figures consisting of an image of Seth embracing an image of the Great Prince [of Hatti], surrounded by a border with the words: “The seal of Seth, the ruler of the sky; the seal of the regulation which Hattusilis made, the Great Prince of Hatti, the powerful, the son of Mursilis, the Great Prince of Hatti, the powerful”etc. etc.⁵⁶

Other Akkadian treaties on clay tablets from the excavations at Ugarit reveal that while the format of a treaty tablet could vary depending on the scribal tradition in which it was composed, the presence of a seal was a regular requirement. We should bear in mind the possibility that even a document like a treaty might have been written on a waxed writing-board: although the boards (*lê'u*) are rarely mentioned at Ugarit they certainly were in current use elsewhere, and a stele from the site, presumably commemorating a treaty ceremony, shows the two parties touching hands, each resting their elbows on a folded writing-board which doubtless contained the text of the treaty (Figure 8.6).⁵⁷

Although we have no clear examples from Ugarit, such writing-boards were doubtless secured when necessary by clay sealings, and hundreds of bullae from the Nisantepe

⁵⁵ See van Soldt 1991, 139 showing that Schaeffer's attempt to identify the West archive as earmarked for administrative texts dealing with affairs outside the city is over-optimistic.

⁵⁶ Translation from Wilson 1969, 201.

⁵⁷ Reproduced from Schaeffer 1936, Pl. 14. His discussion on pp. 115–19 leads to the conclusion that the scene represented is an oath taking, and that the items on the table are tablets giving the wording of the oath. Except that they are better identified as hinged boards, this seems likely to be correct. (Republished and discussed: Yon 1991, 303–5 with Figure 15 on p. 335.)



Figure 8.6. Stele from Ugarit showing treaty ceremony with writing-boards (after Schaeffer 1936 Pl. XIV).

archive at the Hittite capital are thought to have been suspended from boards with hieroglyphic texts.⁵⁸

Domestic Legal Documents

When editing the rich material in PRU 3, Nougayrol divided the majority of Ugarit's legal transactions into three broad categories: acts before witnesses, acts before the king and acts undertaken by the king.⁵⁹ If we treat the acts which did not involve the king as normal, then Ugaritic practice is largely comparable with legal documentation from Mesopotamia: the documents have witnesses, of whom the final one may be the scribe; the principals and the witnesses each are given their patronymics; and a seal was rolled at the top of the obverse (e.g. 16.129 on pp. 32–3). On the other hand, like Alalah legal documents (see p. 386), they are undated and tend to begin, like the acts before the king, with the phrase “From this day

⁵⁸ See Herbordt 2005, 36–9; Herbordt et al. 2011, 25–6. For possible instances of sealings off a writing-board in Neo-Assyrian times see Dalley and Postgate 1984, 74–5.

⁵⁹ Nougayrol 1955, 27–8.

forth ... ” (*ištu ūmi(m) anni(m)*). This is often followed by the phrase “in the presence of witnesses” (*ana pāni šībūti*), which instantly distinguishes it from the royal deeds. Private legal documents of this kind, which are mainly concerned with the transfer of real estate and of persons whether by purchase or ostensibly by donations, do come from the palace, but also as expected from private houses, in which “each of these archives contains no more than ten documents” (Márquez Rowe 2003b, 720).⁶⁰

The acts before or in the name of the king are much more common, especially from within the palace. In his monograph devoted to them, Márquez Rowe identified a total of 176 to 181 examples, only six of which were in Ugaritic (2006, 47). The majority of royal deeds are concerned with real estate, and they share distinctive characteristics. The tablets are sealed at the head of the obverse, not with the seal of the king who is named in the document but with a seal naming its owner as: “Yaqarum, son of Niqmaddu, king of Ugarit”. In a minority of cases it was not this seal, but a replica.⁶¹ This use of a dynastic seal has sometimes been seen as a way of proving the assent of not merely the current reigning monarch but of his entire dynasty (with clear implications for the long-term validity of the document and inviolability of the transaction).⁶² Like private deeds, the text has no proper date, but begins with “From this day forth ...”, followed either by the action of the king or the phrase “in the presence of the king”. At the end of the text there may be the name of the scribe and a caption identifying the seal, either anonymously as “the great seal of the king” or (from the reign of Amittamru II on) giving the name of the king actually wielding the seal, for example “seal of Niqmepa, son of Niqmaddu, King of Ugarit” (RS 16.170, PRU 3, 91), the seal in almost all cases still being the dynastic seal or the replica.⁶³ Examples of royal deeds with witnesses do occur, but they are the exception.⁶⁴

Van Soldt has recently discussed a number of administrative Ugaritic lists concerned with specific land transactions which also feature in the royal deeds. These are of interest because they seem to show that the scribes worked more easily in their own language and script where this was acceptable, but usually continued to draw up the formal documents in Akkadian. Van Soldt comments: “The legal texts are clearly meant as binding contracts of property transfers, whereas the lists were meant for administrative purposes and presumably were not legally binding. Like many other lists in the state bureaucracy they had only a short lifespan and were probably kept for no more than two or three generations. The legal texts, on the other hand, were kept from the time of the Hittite conquest, thereby demonstrating their importance” (2010, 152–3).

⁶⁰ Apart from Nougayrol, PRU 3, pp. 32–41, private legal documents in Akkadian were published by Thureau-Dangin (1937) and Virolleaud (1941).

⁶¹ Nougayrol 1955, xl–xliii; Márquez Rowe 2006, 184–99.

⁶² For the significance of the dynastic seal (and its terminology) see Márquez-Rowe 2006, 197–9; cf. also Lackenbacher 2000, 165 on the views of Boyer and Skaist, and on the text RS 16.249 (PRU 3, pp. 96–8), which incorporates a report on an attempt to forge the royal seal: the criminals “committed a great crime (and) made a seal, a copy of the great seal of the king (NA₄.KIŠIB *mi-lé-er* NA₄.KIŠIB LUGAL GAL *i-te-ep-šu*) and wrote forged tablets (*tup-pa-ti šà-ar-ru-ti*) in the city of Ugarit”.

⁶³ For the details, Márquez Rowe 2006, 203–5.

⁶⁴ Witnesses on royal deeds: Márquez Rowe 2006, 206–7.

Administrative Documents

The interpretation of economic texts is, to paraphrase Jean Nougayrol, often difficult owing to their extreme conciseness (1968, 189). Written either in Ugaritic or Akkadian, and covering a wide range of goods, animals and persons, they frequently enumerate the information they record without any effort to place it in context by specifying the purpose of the list or the persons involved. Hence most of the time we can only guess whether a list is an ephemeral memo or intended to be retained for future reference as a more or less formalised statement. Some texts will give a total, and, as at Alalakh (but not so much in Assyria), more durable and formal lists were introduced by a heading describing the tablet's content. In Akkadian this can be introduced by the word *tuppu*, to which the word *spr* corresponds in Ugaritic documents, as for example "The tablet of the silver (payments) for pasturage" (*tup-pu* KÜ.BAB-BAR *ša ma-qad*, PRU 6.116).⁶⁵ Thanks to the number and fair state of preservation of many of these documents, a wealth of information has been recovered from the archives, often involving lists of people arranged by villages or by profession and in some respects resembling the earlier administrative lists which survived in the palace at Alalakh. They have invited detailed reconstructions of the topography and demography of the state of Ugarit, and some at least must have been designed for retention and consultation, and have been components of well-organised information storage on the part of the palace officials. Like the Alalakh lists they are strictly unilateral, and there is no evidence that they were sealed (unlike some of the Alalakh tablets, p. 390).

Bilateral Texts

Only rarely do the economic texts clearly indicate the apportionment of liabilities or responsibilities to members of the administration or to those outside. As expressed by Arnaud, their ambiguity not only prevents us from knowing what they were supposed to mean, but permits of diametrically opposing interpretations – are they distributions or receipts?⁶⁶ Nevertheless, some texts do apportion liability. Occasionally commodities are said to be "incumbent on" (UGU), and more often "in the charge of" (ŠU; e.g. PRU 6.126; 6.163) an individual. Things are sometimes recorded as "given" (*nadin*, or *tadin* which is an Assyrianism),⁶⁷ but simple verbs such as *maḥāru* "to receive" or *leqû* (Assyrian *laqā'u*) "to take" are rare indeed. It is also rare for the name of a person distributing to be mentioned. By Assyrian standards, one would class such texts as essentially unilateral, internal memoranda, since, even within the administration, for a text to have validity as proof of a liability we would expect at least the identity of the creditor to be specified and to see the impression of the debtor's seal. When recording an

⁶⁵ See on such headings Nougayrol 1970 (PRU 6) on No. 70, with mention of the parallels at Alalakh. This is different from the Nuzi and Assyrian practice of writing *tuppu/i* as the introductory word on an envelope enclosing a tablet (see pp. 71–2 and 368).

⁶⁶ Arnaud 1991, 12. Compare in the same sense already Nougayrol 1970, 67, commenting that the administrative texts are "extrêmement laconiques".

⁶⁷ For example PRU 6.138; 6.156; 6.157 (*nadin*), or PRU 6.140; 6.166' (*tadin*).

obligation to the administration by an outside party, this would apply still more rigorously, and yet we do have texts which seem likely to document this situation but lack both the identity of the creditor and a seal impression.

For example, the palace needed to employ artisans and merchants, as one might expect, and there are texts which must have been used to help regulate these relationships. One instance is this laconic text from the “Palais Sud” in Room 203 (van Soldt 1991, 150):

PRU 6.140 (RS 19.92)

21 URUDU.MEŠ GÉME ¹*ib-bi-su*
a-na e-pa-še ta-din
a-na ¹*a-du-na*
DUMU ú-be-na

21 (shekels) of copper (of?) the slave woman of Ibbisu,
 issued for manufacturing
 to ‘Addunu,
son of Ubenu.

Although it still has obscurities owing to the usual brevity, the text clearly indicates that the copper is being issued to be worked on, and hence this is comparable to those debt-notes observed in Assyria where the administration issued raw materials to a craftsman, often termed *iškāru*. Yet it has no seal, no witnesses and no indication of the creditor. Much the same applies to PRU 6.156 also in Akkadian cuneiform, which comes from Room 204 in the “Palais Sud”:

PRU 6.156 (RS 19.20)

3 GÚ.UN GA.MEŠ
 13 GÚ.UN KU₆.MEŠ
 5 TÚG.ĪI.A.MEŠ ^{uru}*áš-da-di*
 2 *lim* SÍG.ZA.GIN.MEŠ
⁵ ŠU ¹*šu-ku-n[a] na-din*
a-na ma-ka-ri

3 talents of milk?
 13 talents of fish?
 5 Ashdod textiles;
 2000 blue wool –
 delivered (into) the charge of Šukuna
for trading.

This appears to be a short list of a “package” of capital goods issued to a merchant, for which he will no doubt be accountable in due course. Thus it is broadly comparable to some of the trading commission texts at Nuzi (cf. pp. 355–8) or Aššur (pp. 173–4). However, this document too has none of the quasi-legal formalities used further east. Not only is it unwitnessed, but there is no seal impression, the identity of the owner (presumably the palace?) is not stated and no repayment arrangements are mentioned. In Mesopotamian terms, this is no more than a unilateral memorandum. It is true that even at Aššur, in Babu-aḥa-iddina’s household, we have almost equally informal documents recording textiles entrusted to his regular merchant Siqi-ilani, but at Ugarit there are no examples of any more formally drafted texts.

The building called the Palais Sud yielded a largely Akkadian archive which appears to identify it as the work place of the chief accountant (*šatammu rabû*), Yabni-Šapšu, often abbreviated to Yabninu. These texts include administrative lists which look like official business, whereas a couple of Ugaritic documents from the palace show Yabninu himself participating on his own account in international trade. Thus CTA 141 from the Western archives records a delivery to Yabninu of a mixed consignment of merchandise, including oil, perfumes, iron, wood, reeds, tin and myrrh, while PRU 2.127 from the Eastern archives mentions the large

sum of 600 (shekels) of silver with commodities including oil, mares, stone, wool, reeds and other plants. If there had been bilateral documentation associated with trading ventures, we would have expected it here.⁶⁸

Sealing Tablets and Labels

Seal impressions are a constant feature on the legal documents from Ugarit, both royal and private. No doubt seals were used on the Akkadian legal deeds because that was part of the entire package imported from cuneiform traditions proper, and also on the few royal deeds written in Ugaritic, which replicate the formulation of the Akkadian prototypes.⁶⁹ On the other hand, as is evident for instance from Nougayrol's listing of the documents bearing seal impressions in PRU 6 (1970, 167), sealings are a rarity on administrative tablets, which, as we have seen, are not formulated as bilateral instruments using legal formulae as they were in Assyria. One rare instance is PRU 6.163 from Yabninu's archive in the South Palace which is sealed not, like the legal texts, at the top of the obverse, but, like many of the Alalakh administrative tablets, at the base of the reverse. Unfortunately the obverse is too badly damaged to show if there was an explicit statement of liability to accompany the seal impression, and the only surviving general statement is the final line, which reads "In the hands of the mistress of the house" (Courtois 1990, 129).

In the previous paragraph, I was careful to write "administrative tablets" (rather than "texts" or "documents") because seal impressions are relatively frequent on a different class of inscribed clay objects, the "labels" (French "étiquettes"). Van Soldt's study of all the labels reported from Ras Shamra until 1989 makes it very clear that the inscribed examples fall into two major categories (1989, 383).⁷⁰ One group, described as (half-)cylindrical and almost all found in the Palais Sud archive,⁷¹ names written documents related to international affairs, such as "the tablet of treaty of the king of Carchemish" (PRU 4, 292, van Soldt No. 32). Of the nine pieces listed, six are in Ugaritic, and only three in Akkadian, and the inscription usually begins respectively with *spr* or *tuppu*, for example "This tablet (is) of fugitive men".⁷² Van Soldt has identified some of the actual tablets referred to (1989, 386), and significantly even some of the Ugaritic labels would seem to have been attached to Akkadian documents, indicating that they were written for the convenience of readers whose first language was surely Ugaritic. In keeping with this informality although they probably all had string holes, they were not sealed. They were evidently tied with string to the document they mention for whatever reason and can have had no dispositive force.

Labels in the other group have a shape described as a "flattened, truncated cone".⁷³ They too have string-holes, but they were all sealed, and the short texts they bear refer to commodities

⁶⁸ The entire archive is discussed in Courtois 1990; for Yabninu/Yabni-Šapaš and his Assyrian scribe see van Soldt 2001. A survey of documentary evidence for trade at Ugarit is offered by Monroe 2009.

⁶⁹ See Kienast 1979; with more recent comment on this in Márquez Rowe 2006, 29; van Soldt 2010, 152.

⁷⁰ See Monroe 2009, 69 on these labels.

⁷¹ Within the main royal palace, not the Palais Sud.

⁷² *tup-pu an-nu-ú ša LÚ.MEŠ mu-un-na-<ab->du-ti*, PRU 3.76.

⁷³ For photos of two of these showing script, string holes and seal impressions see Schaeffer 1934, 123, Figure 8 with Virolleaud's edition on pp. 134–5.

such as grain, flour, wine, oil, sheep and slaves. Van Soldt is able to list 22 examples, from a variety of provenances (1989, 387), and they are equally split between 11 with alphabetic Ugarit and 11 with syllabic Akkadian texts. Most of these short texts give the amount and nature of the commodity, and in some but by no means all cases the name of a place or of a person – whether as contributor or recipient, and whether or not the owner of the seal, it is usually impossible to be sure. It is a reasonable guess that these labels were each physically attached to the commodity named, in whatever condition it was stored or transported, and this was the excavator's assumption.⁷⁴ The text on each label doubtless had the practical purpose of identifying the source (or possibly sometimes the destination) of the commodity. The function of the impressed seal is more open to doubt: Did it indicate an authorisation or authentication by a supervisory official or was it intended to secure the package during transit? In either case, we should probably see these sealed labels as functionally equivalent to similar sealed but uninscribed labels, of which van Soldt is able to list at least six.⁷⁵ Since we do not have inscribed but unsealed labels bearing this sort of text, it follows that the primary purpose of the sealing is fulfilled by the seal impression, rather than the text, and that the text is a secondary refinement. This explains why sealed inscribed labels are so much more common than sealed inscribed administrative tablets; in other words one could say that at Ugarit the primary use of seal impressions was not on documents written on clay tablets but on other clay artefacts used to regulate social and economic relationships. This function of seals must of course be much older than writing itself in the Near East, and at Aššur we have seen plentiful mention of sealed packages in the administration of Babu-aḥa-iddina's household (see pp. 228–31). It is a case of the written documentation being grafted on to an older pre-literate system, and quite different from the Assyrian bilateral tablets, which borrow their form and function from the legal practices of contemporary society.

The Geographical Context (Figure 8.4)

As already mentioned, much of the Ugarit administrative corpus consists of lists of people of various kinds, and in this respect it resembles the body of texts recovered from the palace at Alalakh (cf. pp. 388–90). While some of these documents list groups of craftsmen or other specialist professionals, others identify people by their geographical location, in two main contexts, military conscription and agricultural production. Outside the city of Ugarit there were towns or villages and farmsteads.⁷⁶ The palace directly controlled the farmsteads, but through the system of state service referred to in Ugarit as *pilku* (related in some way to

⁷⁴ Schaeffer 1957, xl. However, his wording (“Ceux que nous avons retrouvés proviennent de colis intacts, qui ont brûlé lors de l’incendie du palais” does not, I think, amount to a statement that “the labels were found with the remains of the (burned) packages to which they were attached”, as it was interpreted in Van Soldt 1989, 387, but is rather Schaeffer's (entirely reasonable) guess.

⁷⁵ His numbers 8; 13; 23; 35; 43; 46. Fragments without inscription are of course not necessarily from uninscribed sealings.

⁷⁶ Ugaritic *gt*. This word is normalised by Van Soldt as *gittu*, and sometimes written (like the equivalent *dimtu* at Nuzi) with the Sumerogram *an.za.gār*. For a recent summary of divergent reconstructions of the land regime at Ugarit see Van Soldt forthcoming.

Mesopotamian *ilku*), the state also expected to draw military manpower from settlements which were not administratively but only politically under the control of the centre. What is clear is that the administrative records from the capital relate to villages and farmsteads across virtually the entire territory of the state of Ugarit. Liverani reckons with about 150 traditional villages across a territory measuring 75 by 30 kilometres, and “palace farms” commonest in the vicinity of the capital.⁷⁷ As at Alalāḥ, there is no sign of a provincial system in which the administration of different regions was delegated by the centre to a provincial governor and his staff, as in Assyria. While there is some consistency in the groups in which toponyms are listed in the Ugarit texts, there is no nomenclature for these groups which would suggest named districts, and van Soldt’s comprehensive study of the topography of the state of Ugarit concludes that he has “not found an administrative system of districts within the Ugaritic bureaucracy” (2005, 191). In other words, the entire territory was directly administered from the one palace. The contrast with Assyria, which was of course a much bigger polity, is interesting, and this is one respect in which Ugarit and Alalāḥ bear comparison with conditions in Mycenaean Greece, in particular Pylos,⁷⁸ where the written documentation from the administration of the countryside, as well as much industry, was recovered from the palace buildings.

Van Soldt, following Astour, also noted that “the towns lying close to Ugarit (Ma’hadu, Rašū and Šalmā), however, rarely occur in the lists and are to be considered as a separate district to which also the capital belonged.” Excavations at Ras ibn-Hani, on a promontory projecting into the Mediterranean some 10 kilometres south-west of the city of Ugarit itself (and very likely the town named in the texts as Rašū), have turned up more than 100 tablets, mostly but not entirely in alphabetic Ugaritic.⁷⁹ A deposit of about 30 tablets came from a burnt destruction deposit in courtyard II of the North Palace, and some of these are certainly from state administration, including lists of soldiers or merchants.⁸⁰ Because the building from which the texts were recovered at Ras ibn-Hani has all the appearance of a public, if not actually palatial, building, it seems possible that there were literate, and indeed bilit-erate, branches of the administration here (and, by analogy, in the unidentified towns of Ma’hadu and Šalmā). This could account for their rare mention in the documents found at Ugarit, these towns within Astour’s metropolitan district having perhaps been entrusted with administrative control of their own regions. In any case the finds at Ras ibn-Hani make it certain that the scribes were not restricted to the capital itself, a situation conceivably applicable to Alalāḥ (see p. 395).⁸¹

⁷⁷ “fermes palatines”, Liverani 1982, 251. As reconstructed in van Soldt 2005, 71 (reproduced with thanks as Figure 8.4), the territory has maximum dimensions of about 50 x 65 kilometres.

⁷⁸ For the two “Hither” and “Further” provinces into which the toponyms were grouped at Pylos cf. for example Palaima 2001, 158; recently Rougemont 2009, 57–8. Much work on the location of toponyms was done by Bennet (1985 and 1990 in the Knossos documents; and more recently for Pylos 1999; for the whole region 2011).

⁷⁹ For six syllabic Akkadian pieces from Ras ibn Hani see Arnaud and Kennedy 1979; these include pieces of bilingual Sumero-Akkadian lexical texts and a fragment of an Akkadian document from international diplomacy. On the site in general and the North Palace in particular see Van Soldt 2007.

⁸⁰ Bordreuil et al. 1984, 425–7. For the archaeological context see Bounni et al. 1979, 241.

⁸¹ Compare discussion of how far down the administrative (and settlement) hierarchy written records were used at Knossos (Driessen 2001, 118 “seul le palais tenait comptabilité”); Palaima 2001, 154 “the Na documents demonstrate

To sum up, alongside the use of traditional Babylonian language and documentary practices in the realm of legal documents concerned with property rights in land and persons, the palace at Ugarit and individuals with state responsibilities kept records of people in both Akkadian and Ugaritic across the entire state. Very few of these were sealed and they are virtually all unilateral memoranda. Some are no doubt ephemeral, other more formally designated lists must have been retained for reference and constituted an important resource for the administration of the state's relations with its subjects. The Assyrian use of quasi-legal formulae and document formats to control the movement of commodities and responsibilities within the administration is not known here. The nearest we come to bilateral documents regulating the administration's dealings with external or internal persons is the sealed labels, and these may be seen as primarily sealed and only secondarily inscribed, so that they belong in a tradition which made use of sealing as a significant tool. There may well be a parallel here with practices in some of the literate palatial regimes in the eastern Mediterranean: compare Palaima: "There must have been, in this still primarily oral culture with a very specialized and narrow form of literacy, considerable reliance on traditional transactional arrangements that may never have been recorded in writing. The continued use of uninscribed sealings or minimally inscribed sealings is best understood in this way" (2001, 154).

8.3. Further West: The Mycenaean World

Introduction

In 2001, Jan Driessen ventured the idea that the increased use of clay tablets in the palatial records of Late Bronze Age Knossos at the expense of perishable papyrus could have been influenced by the extent to which they had come to be used at Ugarit.⁸² Whether or not this is borne out by further research, the fact remains that the Minoan and Mycenaean palaces constitute the westernmost representatives of the literate palatial culture of the "Amarna Age" and can fairly be considered in the same light. It seems at last to be generally accepted that the land of Ahhiyawa with whom the Hittite Empire interacted over a long period was in the hands of Mycenaean Greeks, even if its precise geographical identity remains open to discussion, and their culture shares plenty of traits with the Near Eastern world, such as horse-drawn battle chariots or a predilection for spices and perfumed oils.⁸³

Sealing

There is a range of aspects in which the archives recovered from the palaces on Crete and the Greek mainland are also reminiscent of Near Eastern counterparts, and in some respects the

that the central palatial administration ... conducts regular transactions with such third-order centers that make their way into tablet records").

⁸² Driessen 2001, 120.

⁸³ For the current state of play in the Ahhiyawa debate see Beckman et al. 2011.

similarities are closer to Assyria than to Ugarit or Alalah. Their use of clay tablets has ensured that a large body of documentation has come down to us, but as in the Near East we have to allow for the certainty, in some cases, and the possibility, in others, that a large proportion of the records was on perishable materials and is invisible to us. This is clearest for much of the Linear A documentation on Crete, where one class of sealed clay “nodules” displays the imprint of folded sheets of parchment.⁸⁴ There is also a strong, though not unanimous, body of opinion which holds that Linear B, used to write Mycenaean Greek, and known principally from clay tablets at Knossos, Pylos in the western Peloponnese and other centres including Thebes and Mycenae, may also have been written on a perishable material. This could explain the narrow range of data presented on the tablets themselves by seeing them as one sector of a larger system of recording in which other sectors used other materials. As of now, virtually all Linear B tablets are thought to be the output of palace administrations, and there is no sign of private or legal documents.⁸⁵

This book has not space, and the author has not the competence, to provide even a brief survey of administrative documentation in the Mycenaean world. The topic has generated a massive literature, largely because of a combination of well-developed scribal habits or practices, in respect of documentary format, which imply meaning, and the telegraphic wording of many of the texts, which makes the precise nature of many transactions hard to reconstruct with confidence and open to varying interpretations. To elicit comparisons with the Near Eastern traditions it may help to focus on a few specific issues. One of these is sealing: although there are other sealed clay artefacts which played their part in the administrative system, the Linear B tablets from Pylos are as a general rule unsealed. The tablets apparently all belong to a time span of no more than a single year, something generally attributed to a scribal practice of drawing up accounts annually on the basis of the raw information from a variety of clay documents. Virtually the entire surviving written record is on clay: either nodules with seal impressions, which are thought to represent the initial stage of data collection, or unsealed clay tablets with a few specific shapes, which correlate with their function and are thought to represent the earlier stages of an accounting hierarchy. At least at Pylos, data from the sealed nodules was later transferred onto clay tablets (perhaps successively a palm-leaf shaped tablet and then a page-shaped one), and then ultimately, it is presumed by some, to a set of records which, being on a perishable substance, have not survived.⁸⁶

In respect of one group of Pylos tablets Palaima comments that “the records are not concerned at all with explicit personal or official responsibility”, even though “there must have been such responsibility, both on the district and local, level of economic production and at the palatial center controlling the entire process” (2001, 157). Since the clay tablets are not sealed and do not give us the identity of the scribe, they are evidently secondary records,

⁸⁴ Cf. the similar bullae thought to have been attached to perishable documents at Hattusa (pp. 401–2).

⁸⁵ There is currently no textual evidence that hinged writing-boards were in use in the Mycenaean palaces, although it does not seem unlikely, and hinges from one such board may have been correctly recognised at Pylos by Shear (1998), also citing a possible parallel at Knossos.

⁸⁶ See Driessen 2001, 118; Schoep 2001, 58; Palaima 2003, 182ff.

unilateral and internal to the administration.⁸⁷ They therefore resemble the Assyrian harvest records or some of the monitoring texts from the Offerings Archive more than anything attested at Ugarit or Alalakh. Sealed nodules, on the other hand, by virtue of their seal impressions, could well have had some bilateral function by providing evidence that a payment had been made or received. Since there are also plenty of uninscribed nodules with sealings it seems that if we are searching for parallels to the commercial-style sealed bilateral documentation used by the administration in Assyria and at Nuzi, this is the place to look. Whether nodules and/or perishable documents also had a role to play outside palatial administration, equivalent to the legal documents further east, is another question,⁸⁸ but it may well be that as at Ugarit, where one class of labels was regularly sealed, the primary essence of the nodule was the seal impression, making the written inscription chronologically and perhaps procedurally a secondary feature of the system. This fits well with Palaima's observation of "considerable reliance on traditional transactional arrangements that may never have been recorded in writing. The continued use of uninscribed sealings or minimally inscribed sealings is best understood in this way" (2001, 154).⁸⁹

Geographical Reach

On the Mycenaean mainland, we see the palace as the single administrative hub, exemplified primarily by Pylos, but with a comparable role at Thebes or Mycenae. The administrative records at Pylos interact directly with individual settlements throughout the territory: there are no second-order towns like the Assyrian provincial capitals which intervene administratively between the village and the palace, even if demographically second-order settlements can be identified (see Palaima 2001, 154; Driessen 2001, 118 "seul le palais tenait comptabilité").⁹⁰ At this level, the system at Pylos or Knossos resembles the situation at Ugarit or Alalakh, since there too the entire polity does seem to have been administered directly from the single royal palace. This is understandable because the scale of the territories administered from each Mycenaean palace is much closer to that of Alalakh and Ugarit than to the extent of the Assyrian realm in the 13th century. On the other hand, by analogy with Mesopotamian parallels, specifically Assyria, the close similarities between the archives from the different mainland palaces might suggest that they all belonged to a single overarching system, making each palace more akin to an Assyrian provincial capital than an independent polity, with the written documentation as a feature of a single dispersed administrative system rather than indigenous to each separate centre: this is a scenario on which Mycenaean

⁸⁷ Cf. Palaima 2003, 153.

⁸⁸ Enough non-palatial buildings have been excavated to suggest that the lack of private sector documents can hardly be attributed entirely to the archaeologists' preference for excavating palaces.

⁸⁹ Note in the same sense Bennet's comment after describing the Linear A clay tablets, that "All other classes of document involve seal-impressions, but do not *require* writing." (2008, 9).

⁹⁰ The same may be true for Knossos at the same time, although earlier the distribution of Linear A documents at a range of sites may reflect a less centralised system (cf. Driessen 2001, 116; Schoep 1999).

experts usually prefer to reserve judgement, although some have opted for one extreme or the other.⁹¹

Work-Assignments: *ta-ra-si-ja* and *iškāru*.

Well attested at Pylos as also at Knossos is a work-assignment system called *ta-ra-si-ja*, thought to equate with the later Greek *talasia* (“weighing out”). This involved the issue of raw materials such as textiles or copper/bronze (at Pylos) to craftsmen who were expected to process them and presumably return a finished product, for example chariot wheels.⁹² Some of these arrangements took place annually (Duhoux 1976, 73), and the whole system sounds closely comparable to the Assyrian *iškāru* contracts, under which raw materials belonging to the palace were issued to craftsmen, textile workers (some of them women) and other employees of the state (e.g. p. 171).⁹³ In both places the question arises whether the workers in question were free agents or tied by some economic or formal social constraints to employment by the palace. Resemblances of this kind do not of course have to be attributed to direct cross-border influence of one polity on another, but they do show that the superficial similarities between the Late Bronze Age states may also be matched by structural similarities in the relationship between society and government.

Contributions to the Central Palace

This can be illustrated with one further example. Within the territory of Pylos there was undoubtedly what has been termed “polity wide mobilization of products”, with documents recording payments or contributions to the centre, understandably described by some as taxation. One group in particular displays a systematic procedure: “The Pylos Ma texts ... record, for each district within the Pylos polity, assessments of six commodities in a fixed ratio to each other” (Bennet 2007, 206).⁹⁴ Not all the commodities can be identified yet, but there is a curious similarity here to the system of fixed offerings to the Aššur Temple described in Chapter 4.1. One could indeed write that the Offerings Archives “record, for each district within the Aššur polity, assessments of four commodities in a fixed ratio to each other” without straying too far from the facts. I am not suggesting that we should re-interpret the Pylos Ma texts as dealing with fixed offerings to a religious shrine, but the basic situation in which the constituent parts of a polity are expected to make preordained contributions

⁹¹ See recently the work entitled “The Kingdom of Mycenae” (Kelder 2010), which represents the single state end of the spectrum. Kelder’s book draws on Near Eastern comparisons, and when viewed from Mesopotamia this does not seem unreasonable (compare my comment in Voutsaki and Killen (eds.) 2001, 160, with an Aegean specialist’s sceptical reaction, Dickinson 2006, 26–7).

⁹² For an extended discussion of the documents see Smith 1993.

⁹³ See Postgate 2010, 30; Bennet 2007, 198. For the *talasia* system in relation to textiles see Nosch 2000; 2006. Note that Killen (2001) would exclude perfumed oil from the system in view of the difficulty of measuring the returned product.

⁹⁴ The nature of the commodities was recently discussed in Killen 2008 and linked with supplies for military manufacture.

to the centre – rather than for instance a percentage levy on actual harvests – is strikingly similar, and one imagines that as in Assyria the punctual fulfilment of the obligation would not merely have had an economic purpose, but also have represented a symbolic statement of adherence to the political status quo. It is no surprise to find that members of a polity were expected to participate in its collective activities, whether or not it was formally linked, as in Assyria, to the state religion. Viewed on a broader canvas, systems in which constituent territories (or cities) made material contributions to a central place had been known in the Near East for centuries if not millennia. The *bala* or “rotation” system of the Ur III state has been described several times, and it has its precursors in south Mesopotamia in the Early Dynastic period, with contributions to the centrally placed temple of Enlil at Nippur. Closer in time, and closer to the Aegean, is the Hittite system in which the stewards (AGRIG) of different towns in the inner core of the Hittite empire maintained supplies of produce (mainly food, but also wool and leather) in their own “seal-houses” at the capital for ceremonies held there.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ See Postgate 2010, 31–2, citing Singer 1984.

Government Records

This final chapter reviews what has emerged about written documents and how they were used in the administration of the Assyrian state, noting some of the parallels in the handful of Late Bronze Age states discussed. Pulling together the threads from the different archives, the records generated by the administrators can be grouped into a few fairly well-defined categories, and we can usually see in what circumstances one of the self-effacing scribes might have produced examples of each category. Most documents can be classed either as unilateral records, storing information for the internal purposes of the organisation, or as bilateral instruments, constituting evidence of a transaction between two parties, one of whom may be external to the organisation,¹ but there must have been overlaps between these two broad categories and it is unreasonable to expect a rigid consistency. As Palaima writes in the Mycenaean context: “No culture ... operates strictly along the lines of the theoretical economic models that we may use to interpret evidence” (2001, 152). The categories listed in this chapter must therefore be treated as guidelines and not immutable rules.

Storing Data: Unilateral Records

The blurred lines between categories are naturally very evident with the tablets on which the scribes note down information for internal consumption, as in this context documentary format was not critical. For an illustration of this we can take Mutta’s Archive (Chapter 4.3), where the information needed for the end-of-season accounts was recorded, but in a very haphazard fashion. Some specialised types of internal record can be isolated within the Assyrian corpus, and the various unilateral categories described in Chapters 4 and 5 can be summarised as in this list, and will be discussed in the same order:

Memoranda

Lists

Monitoring documents

Periodical accounts

¹ Von Dassow 2010, 38–41 discusses the issue of whether cuneiform documents were dispositive or merely evidentiary. My feeling is that in Assyria at this time some documents were certainly dispositive, when combined with the social interactions implicit in their creation, not least because preparing a *tuppu šabittu* must have entailed the sealing of the tablet which itself constituted an essential part of the transaction.

Expenditure or consumption accounts
 Predictive and prescriptive texts

Memoranda

These are simple unsealed factual records, in Assyria sometimes explicitly “written down so as not to be forgotten”. They are essentially narrative, in that they record a transaction, the movement of a commodity within the system. Plentiful examples in the Offerings Archive state “received” (*maḥīr*), but similar statements using the stative may say “measured out” (*madid*) or “poured out” (*tabik*).² They may of course serve as the raw material later compiled into other unilateral and internal records, or be used to provide the basis of a future bilateral document.

Lists

While a memorandum can of course enumerate items, most lists are rather secondary, static records, such as inventories or censuses, listing items or persons within the system. At Alalakh and Ugarit lists, whether of persons or commodities, seem to be the prevalent form of administrative documentation. As noted earlier (pp. 392, 404), they are often introduced with a heading which serves to give them an authoritative role, and thus it is reasonable to classify these as official documents which served as the basis for government action. In some cases at Alalakh, at least, with parallels at Arrapha, such census tablets of men or animals were sealed, and this would seem to be a way to authenticate the list and give it formal status.³ Similar lists, sealed or unsealed, are relatively scarce in Assyria, and this may be in part because wooden writing-boards were used for such purposes. We know, for instance, that the issue of rations to deported populations took place on the basis of lists of persons drawn up on writing-boards (see p. 245), that the state maintained five standing boards of men scheduled for state service (p. 64) and that boards were used by the administrators of clothing production for the state. There is no definite proof that boards were used in this way either at Alalakh or at Ugarit (see p. 398), nor does there seem to be any mention of writing-boards at Nuzi.

Monitoring Documents

This term has been applied to texts in which the data from a set of memoranda are grouped and rationalised to provide a view over time of a series of similar transactions. The notion of monitoring an institution’s transactions over time seemed especially appropriate in the case of the Offerings House. For the most part these do seem to be unilateral records

² Cf. pp. 130, 143; Postgate forthcoming.

³ See Chapter 8 (pp. 392–3).

(see p. 139), but there are also examples which are sealed and formulated as bilateral documents regulating the liabilities of members of the organisation (p. 140).

Periodical Accounts⁴

A specialised form of monitoring document is the periodical account, in which a record of a set of transactions of an individual official or administrative entity relating to a particular commodity or activity was compiled over a period of time. From at latest the later years of Shalmaneser, it was common practice for government institutions to prepare annual accounts (see for example p. 135), often finalised on the 20th Hibur (see on Durkatlimmu p. 304), but they were also drawn up in response to other needs, for periods both shorter and longer than a whole year. In MARV 6.22, it seems that the Offerings Overseer and the governor of the eastern province of Idu are dealing with a 4-year accounting backlog, though only for the grain, because “the accounts of honey, sesame and fruit have not been drawn up”. By contrast, in Mutta’s Archive text No. 95, the principal statement of account stored with the other tablets, was compiled over a period of only about half a year (p. 179).

The motivation for preparing such statements of account is not always apparent. In some cases an account will form the basis for a debt-note, which may cite the account as the source of the obligation recorded, for example in texts which begin “After his accounts from day X to day Y had been drawn up ...”. Examples of such debt-notes seem to have survived more often than the account tablets themselves and they are not usually sealed.⁵ The tabulated accounts of a year’s offerings from every province (p. 97), or the annual count of the palace’s domestic animals at Durkatlimmu (pp. 303ff.) are also unsealed and look more like pure internal information gathering, although it has to be conceded that these documents could have been designed to give the high administrators something to show to the king’s representatives as evidence of the performance of their duties.

Expenditure or Consumption Accounts

A rather different form of account was definitely drawn up so as to supply proof of the discharge of a liability, perhaps especially in those cases where it was not feasible to submit supporting documentation from a third party. Thus the administrative debt-note MARV 1.23 has the provision that the cedar wood is issued to Babu-šuma-ereš “for burning”, and “he will burn it, they will draw up his accounts, (and then) he shall break his tablet”.⁶ It seems his own (daily?) record of the consumption will be accepted as evidence of proper disposal, and debt-notes with similar provisions are known for grain consumption at Tell Billa and Tell al-Rimah, while merchants under contract from the palace are required to “draw up their accounts” on their return.⁷ Although they may have been drawn up by one party without

⁴ On *nikkassu* “account(s)” as a technical term see, pp. 69–70.

⁵ MARV 5.13; 6.25; 7.32; 7.41; and perhaps MARV 3.61. This is not an exhaustive list.

⁶ See p. 162, No. 15 in the Stewards’ Archive.

⁷ See p. 173.

independent verification, the presentation of the completed accounts is effectively one stage in an extended relationship between two parties within the administration, and they were sometimes sealed,⁸ which brings us to consider the range of bilateral texts.

Prescriptive Texts

First though, one final category of unilateral document used by Assyrian administrators is provided by prescriptive texts. These are found in the Offerings Archive, where, often after summarising the current state of accounts between certain officials and the Offerings House, their future obligation to supply is stated (see p. 141). These are informal, unsealed documents and internal to the organisation, but they seem mostly to apply to the final stage of providing the cultic offerings in the temple, and accordingly attest the concern of the Offerings House to ensure that its primary purpose will be punctually fulfilled. Documents of this kind prescribing future transactions are rare if not entirely absent elsewhere, with the sole exception of the Mycenaean world, where we might compare the occasional texts which include a note of future production targets in a distribution of raw materials to workers, or which list “work-assignments (*ta-ra-si-ja*)”.⁹ Of course, as soon as a document of this kind is used to secure the worker’s consent to a work-assignment, it becomes a contract, and so one of the bilateral instruments we may now consider.

Documenting Liabilities: Bilateral Instruments

The impression on a tablet (or envelope) of a seal, or in rare instances some other identification mark, in most cases signals a bilateral instrument. The majority of such documents are debt-notes of one kind or another; other categories of sealed document have been defined previously, and they are discussed here under the following headings:

Debt-notes

Receipts

Receipts for customs dues

Ratified documents

Pre-authorisation

Debt-notes

The general characteristics of the debt-note were described earlier (pp. 77–9) and need not be repeated. There it was mentioned that this documentary format could be adapted to a range of situations, and plenty of examples have been described in the different archives.

⁸ For example MARV 5.7; 7.2.

⁹ Cf. p. 412 on the *ta-ra-si-ja*, and for “targets” in general Bennet 2007, 197–8.

Most of the bilateral debt-notes in the Offerings Archive are concerned with arrears of offerings, that is they are placing on record exact amounts of commodities for which the debtors are liable, and examples of this were presented (p. 123), along with examples of debt-notes recording genuine loans, recognisable by the typically Assyrian phrase *ana pūhi*. A quite different application of the debt-note format is found with the work contracts and delivery contracts. In the work contracts, materials are issued to a specialist craftsman or food processor with the stipulation that he will use them to manufacture specified items and deliver the finished product, at which point his liability is met and he may break the tablet. In addition to No. 25 in Table 4.4, which although witnessed by the Divine Bison, is not in fact from the tablet jar and is a work contract for an oil presser, examples of administrative work contracts are known from the Stewards' Archive, including materials for the manufacture of threshing sledges (No. 4), bows (No. 12), sedan chairs (No. 34) and chariots (No. 35).¹⁰ A rather different situation is where the palace is supplying its workers with the tools of their trade, such as grindstones issued to the flour processors (*alahḫinu*) and brewers (Nos. 51 and 52). These will obviously remain in use and there is no clause requiring them to be handed back. Likewise, where a commodity is issued which will be entirely consumed, such as grain for a feast (Billa, Nos. 7 and 8) or aromatics for incense (MARV 1.23), they cannot be returned, but the official may be required to submit his accounts (p. 416).¹¹

The debt-note format was also used for the palace's dealings with merchants, illustrated by text No. 1 in the Stewards' Archive (see p. 151). The tablet is sealed, but lacks a seal caption and witnesses, a degree of informality which says something about the closeness of the relationship between the stewards and the merchants. Similar informal but sealed debt-notes were not confined to the state administration, but could also be used for transactions internal to a private household, such as KAJ 115 (Urad-Šerua's Archive No. 38), which entrusts a flock-master with three earlier debt-note tablets and charges him with collecting each of the debts.¹² The use of sealed bilateral tablets where the duties of the employee inevitably take him out of reach of the household is understandable, but in Babu-aḫa-iddina's household we may note that his dealings with Siqi-ilani the merchant are not even formulated as debt-notes but are merely unsealed and unwitnessed receipts or memoranda, suggesting an even closer enduring relationship.

In some cases a work contract states that the commodity issued is "for the work-assignment" (*ana iškāri*) of the recipient. This applies as much to the brewers and bakers of the Aššur Temple as it does to craftsmen working for the stewards.¹³ The *iškāru* system is also important in the production of textiles, so that from Tell Ali we have receipts (as opposed to debt-notes) for wool destined for the female slaves of the palace who were to produce a variety of garments: these Tell Ali texts, and others from Durkatlimmu, indicate that the same

¹⁰ And recently published, the 7 talents (~210 kg) of aromatic (myrtle) issued to a perfumier for conversion into scented oil (*ana raqquè*), MARV 10.30.

¹¹ For work and delivery contracts at Tell Chuera see p. 289.

¹² KAJ 115 = Postgate 1988a, No. 38.

¹³ Cf. in the Stewards' Archive Nos. 4 and 12. For a list of *iškāru* assignments in Middle Assyrian contexts see Postgate 2010, 21–3; add now MARV 10.77.

workers provided their labour both under an *iškāru* arrangement and as part of their regular daily employment. The parallel existence of two systems may also explain why within the Offerings House it is only occasionally, where an *iškāru* assignment was involved, that formalised debt-notes (*tuppāte šabbutāte*) were drawn up and sealed by the brewers and bakers.¹⁴ For the most part the regular transmission of commodities within the single organisation was documented not with a debt-note but with a unilateral memorandum often stating no more than “received” (*maḥir*), on which see p. 415.

This use by the administration of a relatively informal debt-note format to control a wide range of both internal and external transactions is a distinctive feature of Middle Assyrian practice. While at Nuzi sealed and unwitnessed tablets were similarly used within an organisation, as shown by Stein especially for Šilwa-Teššup’s household, this adaptation of legal practice and format is not found further to the west. In the Mycenaean palace archives there are no documents “designed to be kept in the possession of the parties involved and/or in state or city archives and to have probative value in legal proceedings” (Palaima 2003, 154), and neither at Alalakh nor at Ugarit do we see the administration using sealed bilateral documentation to control the movement of commodities or the activities of employees in this way. This no doubt partly reflects the fact that there were no comparable documents in use in society at large, to serve as a model for the palace scribes. At Ugarit, it is true, there are the sealed and inscribed labels (p. 406): these seem to show that control was exercised, but primarily by means of sealings, and the use of seals attached to commodities is of course widespread in the Aegean, with or without inscriptions.¹⁵

Receipts

What unites all bilateral debt-notes, whether legal or administrative, is that they are prospective: they provide evidence of an unfulfilled obligation, and once it is fulfilled in most cases the tablet can be destroyed and the whole transaction becomes past history. There are however situations in which a payment is made, and an obligation annulled, but instead of just breaking a tablet the transaction is recorded in a document to be retained by the payer as proof of payment. These are mostly formulated as receipts: like unilateral memoranda (cf. p. 415), they use the word *maḥir* (or *maḥrū*) “received”, but they are sealed and witnessed, and most strikingly are usually case-tablets.

Some of the clearest instances in the public sphere are from Tell al-Rimah and are described in Chapter 5.1. One situation calling for a receipt is when the original contract tablet has been lost or is otherwise unavailable. Another is when an outstanding debt has been only partially

¹⁴ As one might expect, similar work contracts are found in the public domain, such as the contract for the manufacture of 1,000 bricks in return for 10 minas of wool concluded by the wife of Urad-Šerua (Postgate 1988a, No. 48). The Babu-aḥa-iddina archive provides instances of *iškāru* contracts for the production of textiles in the private sector (pp. 219–23).

¹⁵ After noting that “only 22 out of 164 sealings at Pylos bear inscriptions”, Palaima writes, “Thus it is clear that sealings primarily retained their original function ... as recording instruments within transactions that did not require the use of writing” (2003, 174).

repaid, so that the original debt-note cannot be disposed of yet: in this case the recipient seals a document which, after recording the receipt (*maḥir*), states that “they shall deduct it from the tablet with his liability on it”.¹⁶

In these two situations there was an original bilateral document setting up the obligation. In other cases the administration will issue receipts where there was no such prior documentation. One example is provided by tablets recording the payment of customs dues on animals, discussed next. Receipts were also issued acknowledging the delivery of fixed offerings to the Aššur Temple. It is easy to see that the provincial governors who had sent in their contribution wanted confirmation in writing that it had been duly received, and a few such documents were recovered from the archive, although we should not expect too many because they were presumably intended to be retained by the contributors, not by the temple archivists (see p. 130).

As to be expected, bilateral documents of this kind were sealed, and in some if not all instances they were encased in an envelope, which was also sealed, and the resulting duplicated document was known as a *kiširtu*.¹⁷ This usage of case-tablets, which differs radically from earlier second-millennium Assyria and Babylonia and first-millennium Assyria, seems to go back at least to the 14th century, as indicated by KAV 207 + KAJ 233.¹⁸ Good examples of administrative receipts for wool delivered by the flock-masters are known from Tell Ali: the outer envelope has a similar text to the inner tablet, but is usually introduced by the slightly unexpected word “Tablet:” (*tuppi*, written in traditional style DUB.BI). This seems to mean “(Inside this envelope there is) a tablet (which says the following) ...”. The same practice is also known from elsewhere in Assyria, and interestingly can be observed earlier at Nuzi, close to Tell Ali.¹⁹ As with the administrative debt-notes, these sealed administrative receipts are relatively informal, being unwitnessed and often having no seal caption, whereas some legal receipts do, as we would expect, have both the seal caption and witnesses.

Receipts for Customs Dues

These tablets deserve a separate category because they have their own vocabulary. They were evidently issued to the owner of an animal, a slave or, in one case of a consignment of textiles, to confirm that customs dues on it were paid. The texts do not state that the payment has been “received” (*maḥir*), instead the phrase used is *ētamar imtikis* “he has seen and taxed”. Examples are known at Tell al-Rimah (see p. 267 for TR 2059), but documents with very similar format and phraseology are also known from Aššur, from Tell Qubr Abu al-‘Atiq on the Middle Euphrates, and from the antiquities market (probably deriving from Kulišhinaš on

¹⁶ See, p. 263 for Tell al-Rimah. KAJ 159 from Aššur gives a 14th-century example of this deduction procedure in a private legal context.

¹⁷ See pp. 70–3. Where we have an envelope and its inner tablet, both are usually sealed. It is therefore difficult to know whether a single sealed tablet recording a receipt was once encased in an envelope or not. Cuneiform case-tablets with duplicate texts are ultimately the ancestors of the mediaeval diploma.

¹⁸ KAV 207+KAJ 233 belongs to the predominantly 14th-century assemblage Ass. 14446 (Beran 1957, 155–6).

¹⁹ See p. 367.

the upper Ḫabur).²⁰ They are unwitnessed, but sealed, presumably by the tax officer (*mākisu*), although there is no seal caption. It is impossible to say whether these tablets had previously been inside an envelope, but in other respects they bear the hallmarks of an administrative informal bilateral receipt, rather than a legal document.

Ratification by a Third Party

The obvious expectation is that the person sealing a receipt tablet would be the party acknowledging receipt, and this is certainly the case on some occasions.²¹ However, because administrative receipts do not usually have a seal caption, it is not a safe assumption, because in some instances a third party – neither the payer nor the recipient – seals the case-tablet. The best explanation for these situations seems to be that the transaction is thereby ratified by a neutral or higher official within the system. The procedure for ratification of a receipt by a third party is still going a century after the Rimah archives, as we can tell from examples in the Offerings Archive (see examples and discussion pp. 70–3). Admittedly, in the Offerings Archive it is not obvious why it was not sufficient for Izbu-lešir, as the receiving official, to provide a receipt with his seal; perhaps the governor in some way audited the accounts and so his seal confirmed that the totals were accurate, as some form of protection for Izbu-lešir. This is certainly a reasonable interpretation of MARV 6.22, where we learn that Izbu-lešir and the governor of Idu had drawn up their mutual accounts “in the presence of Aššur-kitti-šeši, the Governor of the Land” (see p. 125).

Not all ratified documents are technically receipts, using the verb *maḥāru*, because there are administrative case-tablets from Aššur which instead report that commodities have been “issued” (*tadin*) or “measured out” (*madid*), phrasing already noted for unilateral unsealed records. So as noted on p. 73, although many of the *kiširtu* which have survived for us are indeed “ratified receipts”, some are better described as “ratified issues”.

The possibility that a tablet can be ratified by a third party sealing an envelope is interestingly reminiscent of the situation at Nuzi. There envelopes are uncommon, and in her study of the Šilwa-Teššup archive Stein concluded that “the regular use of envelopes in administrative contexts cannot be established” (see p. 368). As noted there, there is in fact some regularity: in five cases the envelope, giving a summary of the interior tablet, also bears the seal of a highly placed official Ḫašip-apu, son of Taḫirišti, although he is not mentioned in the text of any of the tablets. It seems clear that the addition of an envelope to the tablet enables Ḫašip-apu as a superior third party to indicate his authorisation or approval of the document, although we can’t tell if he was present when the inner tablet was written. As already noted, like Assyrian envelopes, the Nuzi ones are also introduced with the word *tuppu*, and it is very probable that there was some influence passing one way or the other between Nuzi and Aššur to explain these similarities.

²⁰ KAJ 301 and Aynard & Durand 1980 Nos. 8 and 11, edited and discussed by Faist 2001, 184–90. She notes that No. 8 is sealed; for the seal impression on TR 3019 see Parker 1977, 267.

²¹ For example at Tell al-Rimah, p. 265.

Why receipts (and other concluded transactions) should have been put into envelopes remains a mystery. Although at Nuzi it is possible that the function of the envelope was to enable a third party to signify retrospective approval of a transaction recorded on a tablet written sometime earlier, this does not appear to be happening in Assyria, since in MARV 1.73 the text on the inner tablet already envisages the participation of the ratifying official – “Aššur-kitti-šeši has encased” – and the envelope does not appear to supply any information or ratification that was not already present on the tablet.

Pre-authorisations

While in the majority of cases seal impressions are found on formal or informal bilateral documents, they are also used on the envelopes enclosing letters. Here the seal may provide both authentication, confirming to the recipient that the letter is genuinely from the stated sender, and authorisation, confirming that the sender has indeed authorised any actions requested by the letter. A letter envelope usually bears the name of the sender and receiver, and the writer's unbroken seal impression also attests that the contents of the letter inscribed on the inner tablet have not been read by others. All three roles of the seal impression must apply to a greater or lesser degree to virtually all letters, but there is one class of letters, called in my translations “directives” (*našpertu*), which when formalised as an instrument of the administration, are sealed both on the tablet and on the envelope, and are given a date at the end of the text in the manner of a legal document.²² In these cases two functions of the sealing – authentication and authorisation – operate together, but concealment is not required since the text is openly visible on the envelope.

The concept of authorisation is relevant to a few ration lists from Tell Chuera on which seal impressions applied before the cuneiform text seem to be conveying prospective authorisation from an official who is not mentioned in the text (see p. 292). I am not aware of any close parallels in Assyria, but a similar situation is attested at Nuzi in some of the earlier ration lists from the household of Prince Šilwa-Teššup, where the seal is impressed by an individual who has some form of oversight over the transaction and must be authorising the contents (see pp. 365–6). The seals are sometimes not identified by a caption, and Stein comments that the individuals “were evidently familiar to all concerned”. One early wool ration list was sealed by Šilwa-Teššup himself; unusually for an administrative text, this includes the provision that the tablet should be broken, perhaps when the final distribution to the household personnel has taken place; evidently the presence of the impression gave the tablet a dispositive force, so that it needed to be broken to prevent it being used a second time (note that Nuzi tablets are not dated).

That this similarity between Aššur and Nuzi – in each case a higher authority authorising a future administrative transaction (or series of transactions) by sealing a tablet – may not be coincidental is suggested by a comparison with contemporary Babylonia. In the 13th-century records from Nippur there is a class of documents recording the issue of foodstuffs

²² See pp. 67–9; Cancik-Kirschbaum 1996.

classed as *aklu*, translated by CAD as “expenditure”, though perhaps “consumption” might be better. At least six of these bear the seal of a certain Rimutu, who is not the receiving official (whom we might expect to seal), but further up the hierarchy (the chief brewer). Other similar *aklu* texts carry the seal of two other high-ranking officials. Here too, the application of the seal functions as a form of pre-authorisation. Donald Matthews, studying the sealing practices on these tablets, used the phrase “authorising *aklum*-expenditures”, and he must be on the right lines. If we say that by sealing the tablet (and/or envelope) the higher official is authorising the issue of the listed commodities as rations to the staff of the establishment by the junior official who receives them, we have a formulation which would not only suit the Nippur evidence, but also be valid for the Nuzi and Tell Chuera examples.²³

In this context we may revert to the first category of document discussed, the memoranda or lists (p. 415), because at Alalah there are lists of men and horses which are clearly not bilateral contracts but are nevertheless sealed. No captions are given to identify the seal owner, but some tablets bear the impression of a seal known from legal documents to belong to the high official Irkabtu (see pp. 392–4). The conclusion seems justified that the seal impressions on these tablets signify either his authorisation or his confirmation of the information they record, and the absence of captions must imply that his seal was readily recognisable. At Arraphē too there is a comparable set of documents which seem to be recording the involvement of high officials in lists of men. In this case the seals have a caption identifying the owners, unlike Tell Chuera and Alalah, where it is only from the other documents sealed by the same person (Sin-mudammeq and Irkabtu respectively), that we know whose seal it is. A caption was presumably superfluous because the seal of each important person was well known to those concerned, just as with administrative bilateral texts from Assyria sealed without a caption we have to assume that the person sealing (the debtor) was a regular customer and well enough known for his seal to be recognisable to those representing the creditor. The same may apply to the captionless sealing of administrative documents from Ugarit, notably the labels, some of which are sealed but have no inscription at all. This suggests that it is the sealing which is the essential feature of the document, rather than the inscription, and looking still further west to the Aegean, we might choose to compare the extensive use of uninscribed sealings discussed by Palaima, who writes of “considerable reliance on traditional transactional arrangements that may never have been recorded in writing. The continued use of uninscribed sealings or minimally inscribed sealings is best understood in this way” (2001, 154).

This continued use of uncaptioned seals on unilateral documents may well reflect a more fundamental opposition between two traditions: in administrative contexts where individuals and their seals were known to all parties, a seal impression by itself may have sufficed to convey the necessary message, whereas this would have been quite insufficient in a legal context. This could easily have been the case for many of the consignment sealings mentioned in the correspondence of Babu-ahā-iddina, and in consequence these examples may link in to the widespread use of sealing which chronologically preceded, and geographically probably

²³ See Matthews 1992, 58–9 for the texts with Rimutu’s seal.

outrreached, the use of written instruments. It is in this light that we should probably view the numerous documents sealed at Alalāḥ without any indication of the seal owners' identities and possibly some of the sealed items in Linear B contexts without inscriptions – the seal itself giving the item a dispositive or evidentiary force.

Administrative Records: A Summary

To sum up, from the 14th century into the 11th century the Assyrian administration was fairly consistent in its use of documentary formats, across both time and space. Formulae used in commercial contracts were adapted to defining and recording the performance of government business, including both administrative duties and craft production, but some of the legal formalities, including witnesses, seal captions and patronymics, were often dispensed with (see p. 418). Where a member of the administration needed written confirmation that his duty had been performed, and the liability could not be cancelled by simply breaking an existing contract tablet, then a receipt or confirmation of completion would be made out. This would normally be a case-tablet (*kiširtu*), again imitating documentary format in the public domain (see pp. 419–20). In some instances such case-tablet receipts were sealed by a third party who thereby ratified the transaction (see pp. 421–2). Finally there is evidence that a sealed tablet could be used to convey the authorisation of a higher official for the issue of commodities listed in the text, a procedure which may already have been practised at Nuzi and in Kassite Babylonia (see pp. 422–3).

To some degree, these procedures in Assyria resemble practices slightly earlier at Nuzi, where there was also a lively literate commercial sector making extensive use of written instruments, but they are not matched by the earlier archives from the palace at Alalāḥ in the Amq, or at Ugarit, where legal-style contracts do not seem to have been used in the same way within the administration. Although in both states there are numerous legal deeds dealing with the affairs of private citizens, it is unclear how widely the use of cuneiform documents was distributed throughout society outside the immediate environs of the palace (see pp. 395, 408) and its associated elite. Still further afield, there is no sign that Linear B documents were used outside the palace administrations or that they ever had a role in legal contexts affecting citizens' private affairs. Clay tablets inscribed in Linear B were not sealed, and would mostly fall into the category of unilateral administrative memoranda, although at an earlier stage in the recording sequence transactions were recorded on sealed nodules, and whether inscribed or not these may have had bilateral force.²⁴

The Role of Writing in Assyrian Government: Final Observations

Within a society writing may be seen as a bridging mechanism. It can close gaps in time, in space, and in what could be called social distance. Over time, a written document can

²⁴ See p. 411.

provide an organisation with the detailed record of events and transactions from earlier years which even the best illiterate memory could not emulate, and it is clear that Assyrian bureaucrats did keep such records. The most elaborate example of this is provided by the harvest and animal records at Durkatlimmu: compiled annually, no doubt on the basis of primary documentation which has not reached us, these show the provincial government maintaining factual records over decades, which allowed them, and no doubt also the central authorities, to monitor the performance of these state enterprises. Comparable, although less complicated, are the tabulated annual statements of receipts of fixed offerings at the Aššur Temple, which were retained from one century into the next. It is hard for us to be sure of the motivation behind this accounting practice. None of these compilations is sealed, and they are not bilateral instruments designed to regulate transactions within or between organisations. It could be that in response to an ethos of transparent accountability the duties of the responsible official – the provincial governor or the Offerings Overseer – included keeping a record of, and on this basis providing an account of, his activities: we have seen a few examples where the obligation to present accounts is explicitly included in a bilateral administrative contract, and in the Archive of Mutta text no. 95, the nearest thing we have to an annual account, was sealed and ratified.²⁵ Or it may be that the intention was not merely retrospective auditing to demonstrate best practice within government departments, but more constructively to provide the state with information to assist with future planning. Certainly the royal inscriptions of Tiglath-pileser and some of his successors make it clear that the initiative for agricultural development might be taken centrally,²⁶ and decisions about where to concentrate the state's resources could only be assisted by such statistics. Whether the palaces in Crete and the Aegean also had future planning in mind when they prepared their unilateral documentation is equally hard to assess, but it does seem possible, whereas there is no sign that the compilation of economic data of this kind was practised on a grand scale at Nuzi,²⁷ or on any scale at Alalah and Ugarit. However, that the Assyrian scribes were expected to supply this kind of information need not be too surprising, since the consultation of earlier records has been noted for the kingdom of Mari and Ḫana in the early second millennium,²⁸ and as mentioned in the first chapter, it is an obvious possibility that the ambitions of state planners underlay the obsessive assembling of data by the scribes of the Third Dynasty of Ur (see p. 2). They also compiled estimates for future production, as described by Steinkeller (2004, 80–1), something for which at present we have no clear Middle Assyrian parallels.

Across space, correspondence between different parts of the realm could ensure the accurate transmission of information or instructions between one part of the state and another. When accompanied with the formality of a seal impression, the written document can also convey the authority of the writer or dictator of the letter, and the *našpertu* or “directive” is a specialised administrative version of a letter (see pp. 67–9, 292). This was not of course the

²⁵ Cf. p. 179.

²⁶ See p. 10 for one of Tiglath-pileser's inscriptions, and the similar rather abbreviated statements made by several of his successors.

²⁷ On a small scale, cf. the *Sammelurkunden* mentioned on p. 367.

²⁸ Charpin 2010b, 108–9.

only way the system transmitted instructions. Royal commands (*abat šarri*) could come in a letter authenticated by a royal seal, and the word *šipirtu* (from the same root as *našpertu*) is employed for requests brought by messenger from a different sector of the administration.²⁹ Either of these may be mentioned in a bilateral document to provide justification for an expenditure, and the *šipirtu* is probably an oral and not a written instruction. Whether there was any unwritten way the messenger could demonstrate the authority of the official sending the instruction – such as a sealed but uninscribed piece of clay – we cannot judge, but it seems more likely that these are simply instances of the system managing without formalised procedures.

There was also a more general procedure for deputing authority, by the appointment of a representative (*qēpu*). Best attested are “representatives of the king”, and situations have been described previously where they are plainly authorised to enact the wishes of the central authority within the territory of a provincial governor, either in respect of a single transaction or episode, or more generally (see for example pp. 244–8). Like the use of written instruments, this practice was very likely borrowed from the commercial sector, and Babu-aḥa-iddina made extensive use of representatives in his private affairs (see pp. 225–8). The formal appointment of a person to represent an administrator in his official capacity is a familiar feature of Middle Eastern bureaucracies to this day. As with the *šipirtu*, it is conceivable that the delegation of authority could be proven by some formality which did not involve writing, but perhaps it would have been demonstrated as today by the administrator’s written and signed confirmation, though we have no examples of such a document at present.

The use of universally respected verbal formulae, document formats and sealing practices also provides the means for bridging social distance: in the private sector, legally recognised documentation enables two parties with no previous mutual acquaintance to do business with one another, whether it is the sale of land or the loan of barley. With the expansion of the Assyrian state in the 13th century, the number of officials and the distances involved must have obliged administrators to interact with people they did not know, or even know of, but within the administration well-established procedures and formulations similarly ensured that officials could transact business with each other confident that a record of the transaction would be preserved and the resulting documentation honoured. This must have facilitated interaction both horizontally between different state bureaux, and vertically between the centre and the provinces. That there was a considerable degree of uniformity throughout Assyria is shown by the similarities in documents recovered from widely separated places, such as the flock records from Durkatlimmu and Tell Ali, indicating that there was a centralised bureaucratic tradition in force.³⁰ Regrettably, the general reluctance of the scribes to give their names on administrative documents makes it difficult for us to reconstitute a scribal class. Legal documents are usually written by a professional scribe who acts as one of the witnesses, and it is clear that some officials were employed by the state primarily for their

²⁹ For examples, cf. p. 121 Table 4.4 Col. F.

³⁰ Cf. the comments of Cancik-Kirschbaum 2012, 20 on uniformity across Assyria.

scribal activity.³¹ Without better prosopographical evidence it is impossible to see if some of these scribes were redeployed in specialist administrative posts in their own right, but the habit of attaching a scribe to a representative looks as though some acted over time as permanent secretary to a higher official (see p. 50). What is certain is that in the 13th century at least there was a strong ethos of written accountability, exemplified by situations like the issue of state rations to deported populations, where we learn that even provincial governors were expected to act on the basis of detailed lists of the families and to maintain supporting documentation (see p. 247).

In describing Middle Assyrian state administration I have consistently assumed that its written realisation, especially as illustrated by the use of sealed debt-notes, owed much to the long-standing commercial traditions of the city of Aššur. This influence could be seen as operating in two ways: either directly from one written tradition to another, no doubt involving the same people, or by a similar response to the social context of liability, the administrative liability being formulated subconsciously along the same lines as the old commercial ethos.³² No doubt it was a combination of the two, and in either case, it is hardly coincidental that elite households, some of which were large enough to need their own secretariat, were entrusted with provincial and similar governmental responsibilities. This does not mean that the Assyrians were incapable of distinguishing public liabilities from private debts, as the detailed investigation of the written instruments of the 13th-century administration and later reveals clear differences between the documentary practices in the two sectors. The circumscribed world of the administrative cadre operated with less formality than public legal transactions demanded,³³ and this suggests that the government had not allowed itself to be meshed in excessively bureaucratic procedures imposed by a self-perpetuating scribal class. Nevertheless, I believe it remains plausible that one of the sources of the 13th-century system was the commercial background of the families chosen to administer it, for whom the written documentation of liabilities was second nature. Proof of this is much harder to supply, in particular because there is so little in the way of documentation from the 14th century.

In this context it is worth considering how the archives we have discussed relate to the use of writing by the state of Aššur before its rapid expansion in the 13th century. The ethos of recorded liabilities at Nuzi next door appears broadly similar, and we may wonder whether the motivation and techniques of the Assyrian administrators owed much to their predecessors in power, who, like the Nuzi scribes, were serving the Mittanian empire. However, a comparison with the earlier records from Alalah, which must owe much to the administrative system employed by the Mittanian dynasty, suggests that the Aššur and Nuzi system and ethos were not modelled on a Mittanian pattern. Possibly it is relevant that both cities hosted scribes trained in Babylonia, whose kings claimed some control over Aššur in the

³¹ For scribes mentioned in administrative texts cf. p. 48–9; on scribes in general see also the comments of Cancik-Kirschbaum 2012, 20.

³² The same could also be suspected for the Ur III use of “quasi-legal” formulae along with seal impressions (cf. p. 2, on van de Mieroop 1997).

³³ See pp. 418–19.

14th century.³⁴ At present the documentation from Kassite Babylonia is largely confined to temple archives from Nippur and it is difficult to see if there was a similar tradition of bilateral documentation operating within the state administration there (though compare p. 423 for one Babylonian parallel).

One of the most striking aspects of Middle Assyrian government style is how different it was from the administrative practices of the Assyrian state in the first millennium. While the Neo-Assyrian palace scribes certainly kept unilateral records of various kinds, what is missing is any trace of bilateral documentation regulating the affairs of the government. Sealed tablets (which may still have been called *tuppu šabittu*) were confined to legal documents and not used within the administration. Changes to documentary format in the public sector, such as the shift in the function of envelopes from receipts to contracts, bear witness to significant changes in scribal practices at some point around the turn of the millennium,³⁵ and at about the same time it seems that the use of quasi-legal documents to regulate the dealings of officials was simply discarded. This is not entirely an argument from silence, because the state archives from the palaces at Kalḫu and Nineveh betray a different ethos in which officials appear to be expected to do their jobs without copious written documentation. A survey of the Neo-Assyrian administrative correspondence led to the conclusion that “in general administrative commands and decisions were transmitted orally without parallel documentation, and that the system worked via word of mouth within the framework of a recognized hierarchy”.³⁶ This implies the “common acceptance of the validity of oral commands”, and effective operation must have depended “heavily on the mutual acquaintance of at least some of the parties involved,” and on mutual confidence as well. While “the non-use of regular written instruments in the bureaucracy must have limited the ability of the system to function as a single undifferentiated whole in which *any* higher official could give commands and expect performance from *any* lower official”, by comparison with the Middle Assyrian system it was probably much more adaptable. In the Neo-Assyrian empire officials did things because they were trusted to and knew what was expected of them, not because they had sealed a tablet. To suggest that Middle Assyrian state was critically hindered in its response to challenges by bureaucratic paralysis would be going too far, but this could have been a contributory factor in its decline after the 13th century.

³⁴ See Sassmannshausen 2001 for a comprehensive edition and study of Babylonian documents from this time.

³⁵ Cf. Postgate 1997.

³⁶ Postgate 2007, 337.

Appendix 1: The Middle Assyrian Kings

Aššur-nirari II	1424–1418
Aššur-bel-nišešu	1417–1409
Aššur-rim-nišešu	1408–1401
Aššur-nadin-aḫḫe	1400–1391
Eriba-Adad I	1390–1364
Aššur-uballiṭ	1363–1328
Enlil-nirari	1327–1318
Arik-den-ili	1317–1306
Adad-nirari I	1305–1274
Shalmaneser I	1273–1244
Tukulti-Ninurta I	1243–1207
Aššur-nadin-apli	1206–1203
Aššur-nirari III	1202–1197
Enlil-kudurri-ušur	1196–1192
Ninurta-apil-Ekur	1191–1179
Aššur-dan	1178–1133
Ninurta-tukul-Aššur	1133
Mutakkil-Nusku	1133
Aššur-reša-iši	1132–1115
Tiglath-pileser I	1114–1076
Aššared-apil-Ekur	1075–1074
Aššur-bel-kala	1073–1056

This list follows the table in Freydank 1991d, 188–9 (also given in Jakob 2003, 571).

Before the reign of Ninurta-tukul-Aššur, the earlier date range offered in these lists is used, rather than the 10-year younger proposal which follows Boese and Wilhelm. The uncertainty revolves around the length of reign assigned to Ninurta-apil-Ekur, which is three years in two copies of the King List, and 13 years in the Nassouhi version. Cancik-Kirschbaum (1999b, 211 and 217) accepts the evidence in Freydank 1991d, 195 for more than three eponyms during his reign as sufficient reason to prefer the figure 13.

Appendix 2: Eponyms at the End of Shalmaneser's and Start of Tukulti-Ninurta's Reigns

This list follows Röllig 2008, 4.

No.	Eponym's Name	Father's Name
1	Šerriya	
2	Aššur-kašid	
3	Aššur-mušaḇši	Iddin-Mer
4	Aššur-mušaḇši	Anu-mušaḇlim
5	Qibi-Aššur	Šamaš-aḥa-iddina
6	Mušaḇlim-Aššur	(Aššur ² -mušaḇši)
7	Aššur-nadin-šume	(Aššur-le'i)
8	Qibi-Aššur	Šilli-Marduk
9	Ina-pi-Aššur-lišlim	Babu-aḥa-iddina
10	Ber-šumu-lešir	
11	Aššur-dammeq	Abi-ili
12	Ber-bel-lite	
13	Ištar-ereš	Salmanu-qarrad
14	Lullayu	
15	Aššur-ketti-ide	Abi-ili
16	Ekaltayu	Abi-ili
17	Aššur-da'issunu	
18	Riš-Adad(?)	(Nabu-[. . .])
19	Nabium-bela-ušur	
20	Usat-Marduk	
21	Enlil-ašared	
22	Ittabši-den-Aššur	
23	Ubru	
24	Tukulti-Ninurta	(Salmanu-ašared)
25	Qibi-Aššur	Ibašši-ili
26	Mušaḇlim-Adad	(Salmanu-qarrad)
27	Adad-bel-gabbe	<i>mār šarri</i>
28	Šunu-qardu	
29	Libur-zanin-Aššur	
30	Aššur-nadin-apli	<i>mār šarri</i>
31	Urad-ilani(?)	
32	Adad-uma'i	
33	Abattu	Adad-šamši
34	Abattu	Adad-šumu-lešir
35	Aššur-da'an	
36	Etel-pi-Aššur	(Kurbanu)

No.	Eponym's Name	Father's Name
37	Uşur-namkur-şarri	
38	Aşşur-bel-ilani	
39	Aşşur-zera-iddina	
40	Abi-ili	Katiri
41	Ber-nadin-apli(?)	
42	Salmanu-şuma-uşur	
43	Enlil-nadin-apli(?)	
44	Ina-Aşşur-şuma-aşbat	(Aşşur-nadin-şumi)
45	Ber-işmanni(?)	

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Bibliographical Abbreviations

AASOR	<i>Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
AdŠ	<i>Das Archiv des Šilwa-Teššup</i> (see under Stein and Wilhelm)
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
ALT	Alalakh Tablet (numbering of Wiseman 1953).
An.Or.	<i>Analecta Orientalia</i> (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute)
AnSt	<i>Anatolian Studies</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament. Veröffentlichungen zur Kultur und Geschichte des Alten Orients und des Alten Testaments, Herausgegeben von Kurt Bergerhof, Manfred Dietrich, Oswald Loretz (Neukirchen-Vluyn)
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>
Arch. Or.	<i>Archiv Orientální</i>
ARMT	Archives Royales de Mari
Ass.	Excavation number of tablets from Assur
Assur journal	Assur (Malibu: UNDENA)
BAM	F. Köcher, Die babylonisch-assyrische Medizin in Texten und Untersuchungen (Berlin)
BAR	British Archaeological Reports
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BATSH	Berichte der Ausgrabung Tall Šēḫ Ḥamad/Dūr-katlimmu
BE	The Babylonian Expedition of the University of Pennsylvania
Bi	siglum for texts from Tell Billa (Finkelstein 1953)
BSAI	British School of Archaeology in Iraq
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary</i> (Chicago)
CRAIBL	<i>Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres</i>
CTN	Cuneiform Texts from Nimrud (London: BSAI)
HSS	Harvard Semitic Series
HSOA	Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient
IM	registration number of tablets in the Iraq Museum
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JCS	<i>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</i>
JEN	Joint Expedition to Nuzi
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
JSS	<i>Journal of Semitic Studies</i>
KAH	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur Historischen Inhalts
KAJ	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur Juristischen Inhalts
KAV	Keilschrifttexte aus Assur Verschiedenen Inhalts
MAOG	<i>Mitteilungen der Altorientalischen Gesellschaft</i>
MARV	H. Freydank, Mittelassyrische Rechtsurkunden und Verwaltungstexte
MARV 1	= VS 19/NF3
MARV 2	= VS 21/NF5
MARV 3	= WVD OG 92

MARV 4	= WVDOG 99
MARV 5	= WVDOG 106
MARV 6	= WVDOG 109
MARV 7	= WVDOG 111
MARV 8	= WVDOG 119
MARV 9	= WVDOG 125
MARV 10	= WVDOG 134
MARV 5–9 with B. Feller, MARV 10 with D. Prechel.	
MDOG	<i>Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft</i>
MSL	Materialien zum Sumerischen Lexikon/ Materials for the Sumerian Lexicon. (Rome)
MVAeG	<i>Mitteilungen der Vorderasiatischen-Aegyptischen Gesellschaft</i>
NABU	NABU: <i>Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires</i>
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta (Louvain/Leuven)
OLZ	<i>Orientalistische Literaturzeitung</i>
Orientalia N.S.	Orientalia Nova Series (Rome)
PIHANS	Publications de l'Institut historique-archéologique néerlandais de Stamboul (Leiden)
PNA	<i>Prosopography of the Neo-Assyrian Empire</i> (Helsinki)
PRU	<i>Le Palais Royal d'Ugarit</i> (Paris)
RA	<i>Revue d'assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale</i>
RAI	Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale
RGTC	Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes
RIAA	L. Speleers, <i>Recueil des inscriptions de l'Asie Antérieure des Musées Royaux du Cinquantenaire à Bruxelles</i> (Brussels 1925).
RIMA	The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia. Assyrian periods (Toronto)
RIA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie</i>
SAA	State Archives of Assyria
SAAB	<i>State Archives of Assyria Bulletin</i>
SAAS	State Archives of Assyria Studies
SAOC	Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization (Chicago; Oriental Institute)
SCCNH	Studies on the Civilization and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians
SMEA	<i>Studi micenei ed egeo-anatolici</i>
SGKAO	Schriften zur Geschichte und Kultur des Alten Orients (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag)
TR	siglum for texts from Tell al-Rimah
TTK	Türk Tarih Kurumu
UF	<i>Ugarit-Forschungen</i>
VAT	Catalogue number of tablets in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.
VS	Vorderasiatische Schriftdenkmäler
WdO	<i>Die Welt des Orients</i>
WVDOG	Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete</i>

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Akkadian Words

This index covers Akkadian words discussed (and a few from other languages) and technical terms such as professions and commodities. Where a logogram can fairly certainly be assigned to an Akkadian word it is cited there; logograms with uncertain reading (for whatever reason) are listed at the end.

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